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BP. HOUGH'S

SERMONS AND CHARGES.

SERMONS

AND

CHARGES

BY THE

RIGHT REV. JOHN HOUGH, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD,
IN THE REIGN OF JAMES II,

And successively

BISHOP OF OXFORD, LITCHFIELD AND COVENTRY, AND WORCESTER.

WITH

AN APPENDIX.

To which is prefixed,

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY

WILLIAM RUSSELL, B.D.

FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE.

OXFORD,
PRINTED BY W. BAXTER,
For F. C. and J. Rivington, St. Paul's Church Yard, and Waterloo Place, London; and J. Parker, Oxford.
1821.

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PREFACE.

THE immediate object of the present publication is to assist the family of a near relative of the Prelate whose works it contains. Nor, whatever may be their merit, are they brought forward with any view of promoting the reputation of a man, whose character has been already established beyond dispute on the highest point of distinction.

It is fair to observe, that the statements of Mr. WILMOT and Dr. CHALMERS, in their biographical accounts of the Bishop, lead to a supposition, that such a publication is contrary to his express injunctions. But the sole authority on which they rest their assertions is that of Mr. STEBBING SHAW in his History of Stafford-

shire, whose information is by no means so accurate and decisive as to be at all relied upon. Besides, the account published of the Bishop shortly after his death is silent on the subject, as also his own Will, where it is more than probable that a positive charge would have been inserted, had his antipathy to the appearance of his writings in print been as great as is represented.

The works now edited are selected from a body of manuscript papers of the Bishop, which have come into the hands of the present possessor by direct inheritance. The similarity of writing and style throughout, and the certainty that many are the originals of Sermons and Charges printed during the Bishop's life, are a sufficient guarantee for the authenticity of the present volume. Should any of the compositions contained in it be found to have appeared before, the circumstance will be attributed to the difficulty of procuring information on the subject.

To the end of the volume is annexed a view of the Arminian and Calvinistic

systems, with observations on them, generally attributed to the Bishop, and of an importance to justify their appearance in their present place.

The difficulty of general access to works of history and biography, in which the memorials of Bishop Hough's public and private life are preserved, may render the sketch which is prefixed acceptable to many who cast their eye on this book, and who would be glad to see the scattered particulars which have been left of him collected into one point.

But it is under the peculiar circumstances which have urged its publication, that this volume is recommended to the kind indulgence of its readers; while a confident hope is entertained, that nothing will have been done contrary to the will, or injurious to the memory, of Bishop Hough.

MEMOIR

OF

DR. JOHN HOUGH.

JOHN HOUGH was born in Middlesex, in the second year of the Commonwealth, of parents highly respectable in their own station, and in family descent. His father, a London citizen, designing him for the clerical profession, sent him for his education to a school at Birmingham or at Walsall, whence he was removed in his eighteenth year to Oxford. Here he was admitted to a demyship at Magdalen College in November 1669, on a vacancy which occurred in that month; and this, according to a custom which had prevailed from the earliest time, but was discontinued for wise reasons in 1686, of supplying each vacancy, as it took place during the year, from those candidates, whose names had been entered by the officers on the College Rolls at the annual election, in the regular routine of seniority.

Of the first part of his academical career little is recorded, nor does it appear to have been distinguished for much literary eminence. The testimony however given to his character at a future period on his election to the Presidentship of the College proves the esteem and affection which he must have gained amongst his cotemporaries; and the stations he afterwards filled in early life are no small criteria of the merit which he then possessed.

After having been admitted to his two first academical degrees, a fellowship, and holy orders, and having exercised himself for a short time in his ministerial duties on a curacy in Oxfordshire, he was invited to attend the Duke of Ormond, then Chancellor of the University, as his domestic chaplain in his Lord-Lieutenantcy in Ireland. This happened about the time of the Popish conspiracy, and Mr. Hough's chambers were searched by order of the then Vice-Chancellor, for letters which he was supposed to have received from an old College friend, who had left his society and the kingdom, turned Papist, and was believed to be a well-wisher to the plot. Nothing however was found which could

justify the step, or create suspicions prejudicial to Mr. Hough's political or religious principles.

His stay in Ireland was neither long nor lucrative, and the preferment in that country in the gift of his patron was either voluntarily declined by him, or, as it is said, was lost out of his hands by the accidental circumstance of his being sea-bound during the disposal of some high ecclesiastical dignities. On his return to England soon after, this loss, which cannot be considered by his society and the nation but as highly fortunate, was in some measure atoned for, by the living of Tempsford in Bedfordshire, and a Prebendal stall at Worcester.

Two years had not elapsed from his acquisition of this preferment, before he was called upon to act that conspicuous part in his Society, which drew upon him the eyes of the nation at large, and gained him a lasting station in their gratitude and esteem. An account of the transactions is preserved in the national records, the public histories, and private memoirs, of that interesting and eventful period, which contain a more detailed statement of the proceedings than

can be given within the limits of this present sketch. But the sum and substance are as follow.

At the end of March, 1687, the Presidentship of Magdalen College became vacant, and was to be filled up thirteen days after by an election, of which statutable notice was issued. King James the Second, who, in his zeal for Popery and absolute rule, had already stretched his prerogative beyond law, and to acts of violence in civil and ecclesiastical matters, availed himself of this occasion for putting to the test that passive obedience, which the University in a public declaration had just before professed. He therefore sent a royal mandate, through Lord Sunderland, President of the Council, recommending the Fellows of the College to elect Mr. Antony Farmer, and containing a dispensation of any statute or custom which stood in his way. To these letters a temperate and loyal answer was returned, stating, without any allusion to the King's dispensing power, the unfitness and incapability of Mr. Farmer for the office by reason of their statutes, and praying, either to be left to their conscience, or for the

recommendation of a more serviceable person. The election was postponed for two days, that a reply might be received, but none being made, except that the King expected obedience, Mr. Hough was on the fifteenth of April chosen and pronounced President with the usual solemnities, two only of the seniority with whom the election ultimately rested declaring *viva voce* for Mr. Farmer, one of whom was in the following reign executed for high treason. He was without loss of time presented to the College visitor, Dr. Mews, the Bishop of Winchester, confirmed by him, and installed afterwards in due form in the chapel of the College.

This proceeding was naturally calculated to bring down on the Society the King's displeasure; and no time was lost in taking steps to avert it, by laying a representation before him shewing the reason and necessity of their conduct, and also by the intercession of their visitor, and of the Duke of Ormond. But all was to no purpose; and they were summoned to appear by deputation in the newly erected and illegal court of His Majesty's commissioners for

ecclesiastical causes assembled at Whitehall to account for their disobedience.

The apology made by the deputies on this occasion was of the same tenor and substance with their previous statements; not only proving Mr. Farmer's disqualifications for the office of President by his immoral and irreligious conduct, of which undeniable evidence was produced, and by his never having been a Fellow either of Magdalen or New College; but denying the King's power to grant, or their own to accept, any dispensation whatever, either of a statute to which they had sworn obedience on their entry into the Society, or of the oath itself which they had then made to obey the statutes, and consent to no dispensation of any kind or degree. At the same time they declared their readiness to have complied (as had often been their practice) with the mandatory letters of the King, had the person recommended been in every way qualified by the ordinances of the Founder.

In spite of this, and without any reason assigned, the election of Mr. Hough was declared an undue one, and therefore void:

and the sentence, which was accompanied by a suspension of two of the senior Fellows, and an inhibition to fill up any office, was followed by another royal mandate with the same dispensation, recommending, not Mr. Farmer, of whose profligacy and irreligion the government began to be ashamed, but Dr. Samuel Parker, then Bishop of Oxford, a creature of the Court, and an open professor of popery, who was equally incapable by the statutes of being elected to the situation of President.

The Society resisted this second command with equal firmness, having now, besides the inviolability of their statutes and oaths, other reasons for their non-compliance, in the actual occupation of the office by Mr. (now Dr.) Hough, and the personal interest he had acquired in it as his freehold. Nor could they be induced by the presence of the King himself, who went to Oxford in the following month to enforce obedience, to depart from the line they had hitherto pursued.

The interview indeed between the King and the Fellows, who had been summoned to meet him at Christ Church, the Deanery of which was held by Dr. Parker together

with the Bishopric of Oxford, served to shew in stronger colours the virtuous zeal and high sense of duty which restrained the one from an act of deliberate perjury, and the intemperate and tyrannical spirit of the other which would oblige them to it. A petition, couched in the most humble and loyal terms, was tendered to his Majesty by the Fellows on their knees, which he would not accept, accompanying his refusal with the most gross threats and unjustifiable language.

No part was taken in these proceedings by Dr. Hough, but an account was sent to him at Astrop Wells of the issue of this conference, of the inexorable anger of the King, and of the charges which he had laid against the Society of having been an "undutiful, unmannerly, refractory, and turbulent body" for a great period of years.

Amongst the persons who attended the King on this visit, was the celebrated William Penn the Quaker, whose property, abilities, integrity, and humanity had procured him not only a great degree of weight with his own and other sects, as well as universal esteem, but the personal

and immediate confidence of the King. This connexion however seems to have been cemented by views of mutual interest and service; the influence which Penn had with King James gaining for himself and his friends a relief from many penal laws of that time, whilst that which he had with the dissenters in general was applied by the King to his own designs in favour of popery, under colour of a general toleration and suspension of all statutes whatever enacting pains and disabilities against any class of nonconformists.

It appears that, at the close of the above conference, Penn went down to the College in hopes of persuading the Fellows to comply with the King's wishes. But his interference was by no means improper, and he was so far convinced by what was told him there of the hardships of their case, that he wrote to the King in their behalf, and did not scruple to declare, "that such royal mandates were a force on conscience, and not agreeable to the King's other gracious indulgencies."

The credit, however, which this humane man enjoyed with the King, and which he had so often used to undeceive him in

the wrong impressions which had been given him of any portion of his subjects, and to reconcile them to his favour, was here of no avail. The King issued an order for proceeding against the College by a writ of Quo Warranto, an act of law which had been abused for purposes of state in this and the preceding reign in a manner that gave great and just offence, and which, if the decision were adverse to the Society, whether applicable to their case or not, would immediately deprive them of their charter.

Whilst this great evil impended, another effort was made to avert it by a letter sent to Dr. Bailey, one of the senior Fellows, without signature, but which was afterwards supposed on every good ground to be written by Penn. It spoke the language of affection, urging them either to compliance, or to devise some expedient for preventing their ruin. It stated that the legal process about to be instituted always went in favour of the Crown, that the King's temper was unyielding, and that it would be more prudent to give way to the present tide of affairs, and wait patiently for a more auspicious season. It likewise in-

timated, that the violation of any single statute, which among so many was a thing to be considered as almost unavoidable, forfeited the grant of the College, and laid it open to the King's disposal.

To this letter, which ended with predictions of the train of evils which their fatal overthrow would bring down on the University and the Church, an able and argumentative reply was immediately sent. It shewed, that being conscious of no offence, they did not fear the issue of the intended process of law, which had been decided in many instances in favour of the subject, and that the institution of such a process against a College or any ecclesiastical corporation was a novel thing, because individual misdemeanors and particular abuses do not dissolve such a Society; and, should such a dissolution ever take place, its revenues return to the Founder's heirs. An appeal was also made to his Majesty's former declarations in favour of liberty of conscience and the security of private property, as a guarantee against any invasion of their rights owing to his anger, and to the several instances in which their loyalty had been put to the

test in former reigns, as no mean evidence of their zeal for monarchy, and attachment to the royal family.

It appears also, that about the same time a string of queries was sent to the Society from Windsor, where the Court then was, drawn up with much art and sophistry, whose drift was to shew that the President might be admitted at once according to the King's wishes without any election, and therefore without any force upon conscience. The interests of the Protestant religion, of their personal relations, and worldly concerns, were also brought forward to influence their minds. But the guilt of perjury could not be got over by any prudential considerations: no admission without election had ever taken place, except in one instance in Queen Elizabeth's reign, when the office had accidentally become lapsed: and they chose to submit to the consequences of forfeiture and deprivation, (if royal authority could so stretch its visitatorial power as to supersede the laws of the land and the local statutes of the College,) rather than do evil that good might come.

A still further and a last attempt was

moreover made to stop all legal proceedings, by a conference had at Windsor between Penn and a deputation from the College, at the head of which was Dr. Hough. The detail of the matter, as communicated by him in a letter to a relation, displays in an eminent degree his ardent zeal towards the reformed Church of England, his integrity and sense of duty. Penn professed much concern for the welfare of the College; but though he thought proper, in an historical account of his acquaintance with the King, to disavow all popish principles with which he had been charged, and did not propose any thing by way of accommodation, words fell from him which intimated a willingness on his part that this Society might be given up to the Papists, as Christ Church and University had been, without detriment to the Church of England.

No amicable result could be expected from such an interview, and besides, the matter was gone too far to be stopped. Concession was declined on either side, and the King and his Ministers had actually prepared for the memorable visita-

tion of the College by a commission, which brought into full play that intrepidity, courage, prudence, and temper, which has endeared the memory of Dr. Hough to the latest posterity.

The Lords Commissioners specially appointed to this purpose were Cartwright, Bishop of Chester, Lord Chief Justice Wright, and Mr. Baron Jenner, who arrived in Oxford on the 20th of October, 1687, attended by three troops of horse, which quartered in the place, and proceeded the next morning to the business on which they had been sent, a regular citation having been previously issued for the appearance of the "pretended" President and the Fellows at the same time.

The scene exhibited this day in the College Hall, and on the following in the Common Room, at the close of which the sentence of amotion already decreed at Whitehall was confirmed by the erasure of Dr. Hough's name from the College books, was calculated by its novelty and singularity, and the demeanour of those who were standing in judgment, to excite the highest interest and admiration in the persons who witnessed it.

The affair was opened by a speech from the Bishop of Chester, the design of which was, by promises of royal favour and threats of punishment hereafter as well as here, to induce compliance. But the three doctrines which he urged—that unconditional and unlimited obedience was a tenet of the Church of England—that Colleges and all other corporations were the creatures of the Crown—and that it was insolence to bring forward local statutes in contempt of the King, by whose authority they were made—prove of themselves the spirit by which he was animated.

The greater part of both days was occupied in an examination chiefly of Dr. Hough in a variety of points arising out of the past transactions, the tone of whose answers was throughout temperate but inflexible; nor could the arbitrary and overbearing conduct of the commissioners prevent him from declaring, that they would submit to their visitation no further than was consistent with "the laws of the land, and the statutes of the College," and that "by the grace of God he never would admit of any alteration from the statutes whatsoever."

The substance of his reply to the rei-

terated charges of contempt and disloyalty rested, as far as concerned the Society, on the perpetual obligation of their oaths from which no power could loose them, and of their statutes to which obedience was due and indispensable, except in things which, such as the saying of mass, were in themselves unlawful. His personal refusal to obey the former decree was grounded on the fact of his having been condemned, without hearing or summons, to part with a freehold, of which nothing could dispossess him but an act of law or a College statute. At the conclusion of the whole, the keys of the lodgings were demanded of him, which he peremptorily refused to surrender, denying the visitatorial power claimed by the commissioners, and doubting that of the King himself. After three solemn but vain admonitions to him to depart peaceably, the sentence of amotion was executed; not however without a manly and dignified "protest" against the iniquity of all the proceedings, and an "appeal to the King in his Courts of Justice."

The whole deportment indeed of Dr. Hough throughout this important contest was worthy of admiration. It was not a

factious spirit, or a lawless desire of insubordination, which gave birth to his opposition to the King's pleasure. His whole language and demeanour were that of a man well trained in the best principles of allegiance to his Sovereign, submission to the laws, and a dutiful regard to the constituted authorities. Yet he spoke and acted as a freeman of England, whose rights are established by law, and are secured against any encroachments on private property, by barriers which no power on earth may break down with impunity.

The rest of the Society with few exceptions partook of the same patriotic feeling, as was testified by what was styled a "tumultuous, seditious, and insolent" murmur of approbation which followed Dr. Hough's appeal, which also incensed the Commissioners so highly, that they bound him over, as having occasioned it by his carriage and language, in a bond of £1000, to answer for it in the Court of King's Bench.

The removal of Dr. Hough was immediately succeeded by the instalment of Bishop Parker's proxy by the Commissioners alone: and, to crown the whole, a forcible entry was made into the lodgings

of the President on the 25th of October, and possession of them given to Parker. "A proceeding this, which was viewed," says Burnet, "with just indignation by the nation as well as the University. It was thought an open piece of burglary and robbery, when men authorized by no legal commission came and forcibly turned men out of their possessions and freeholds."

Out of twenty-eight Fellows, only two at all submitted to these proceedings. The rest firmly and resolutely supported their President and the statutes, conducting themselves at the same time with that personal respect to the Commissioners which obtained their approbation, though in return they had been treated by them at various times with great contempt.

At this sessions, one of the senior Fellows was expelled, who had been most strenuous in opposing the whole proceeding, and particularly in answering the plea advanced by the Commissioners, that the King's mandate to elect one person implied an inhibition to elect another; and a second was suspended for being more bold than the rest in his answers to the Commissioners. And at an adjourned meeting in the fol-

lowing month, to which all the Fellows had been summoned, after a long speech full of threats, intimidation, and reproach from the Bishop of Chester, and many vain efforts to induce them to sign an humble petition and submission, the rest, except two, were deprived and expelled. And still further, on the 10th of December a proclamation was issued from the Ecclesiastical Court at Whitehall, decreeing that they and Dr. Hough were incapable of being admitted to ecclesiastical preferment, and, where it might not have taken place, to ordination. This, with the expulsion of fourteen Demies in January, for refusing to appear to the summons of the new President, closed these arbitrary and unlawful measures.

Parker however enjoyed but little benefit from his new situation. His house was nearly empty and deserted, and five months had scarcely elapsed from the day of his installation before he left the President's chair again vacant by his death. This was a fair opportunity to the King for treading back his steps, and restoring to a private corporation of his subjects their free and indefeasible privileges. But his infatuation

had risen so high, that the same spirit which urged him to defy the public voice in his persecution of the Bishops, and the seizure of the charter of the city of London, prompted him here also to persevere in his unjust course. And in conformity with it, a man of the name of Bonaventure Gifford, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, and a secular Priest, much less qualified than the two former for the situation, was instantly appointed to it.

But he likewise was not destined to stay in it long. The time had at length arrived when the people at large, sensible of the danger into which their religion and liberty had fallen, gave open encouragement to an invasion of the kingdom by the Prince of Orange, and anxiously looked forward to a revolution of their government, which would regain them the rights of which they were now gradually despoiled. Nay, so far was this feeling spread, that when at last the King, by information in all quarters, was certified of the storm which threatened him, the steps which he took to secure his throne were made too late. He became indeed so full of alarm, and so conscious of his past error and present danger, that

his eagerness for concession now was more violent than his pertinacity had been before.

And amongst the faults he hastened to amend, was his unconstitutional interference with the Society of Magdalen College. The Visitor of the College was accordingly desired to settle it regularly and statutably, which was done after a short delay. And it is a singular fact, that the day on which Dr. Hough and his fellow-sufferers were restored to all their privileges, rights, and immunities, was the anniversary of that of their expulsion. Thus ended an unhappy contest, whose issue not only encouraged other Societies similarly constituted (more particularly that of King's College in Cambridge) to relieve themselves from the encroachments which had gradually been made upon the rights of private corporations, but seemed to set at rest the question as to the visitatorial interference with a private College, having a special Visitor, being a branch of royal prerogative.

Dr. Hough had not been reinstated in his Presidentship two years, before he was appointed by King William to the See of Oxford, with licence to hold them together.

This elevation to the episcopal bench in a place which had been the scene of his manly and patriotic virtue, and consequent degradation, must have been highly gratifying to him as a reward for the one and an atonement for the other. But his conduct through the nine years in which he continued in this See was marked with the same benignity, urbanity, and temper, for which he was before distinguished, and which shewed itself not only to his friends, but to those who had differed from him in opinion, or opposed his views.

Nothing occurred to bring him forward again into distinction at this period, of which the memorials are few, but there is enough to shew that he executed with credit and assiduity the several duties imposed on him by his College, his Diocese, and the State. It was no small proof of his zeal for learning and respect for talent, that he had the first year of his office elected into the Society the illustrious Addison, who afterwards gratefully and repeatedly acknowledged the favour and kindness shewn him by the Bishop. His liberality and attachment to the place of his education were amply shewn by his repair of the

President's lodgings at his own expence, and a gift of £1000 to the New Building fund of the Society. And what is left of his correspondence at this time leads us to believe, that he constantly attended in Parliament, and gave his support to the new government. But his prudence and equality of temper withdrew him from the stream of party spirit, which ran with such violence during this and the succeeding reigns.

On his promotion to the See of Litchfield and Coventry in the Year 1699, he resigned into other hands a post obtained, secured, and administered with honour, carrying with him the esteem and regard of those from whom he was now about to withdraw. This translation seems to have broken off his connection with the University, except by epistolary correspondence with a few friends, with whom he communicated respecting the passing concerns of the place. Few of these letters exist, and those which do are but of trifling interest: in one of them, which touches on the subject of a proposed academy of exercise in the University, his language is that of a man of correct judgment in matters of edu-

cation, studious of the welfare and sound discipline of the establishment. After two or three years had elapsed he never again visited Oxford. It cannot however be imagined, that the tie which united him to his own Society should at once be dissolved. For some little time he was naturally solicited by his friends to exert the claims which he must have on its lasting gratitude in promoting their views in the College. And in some instances he did not scruple to move the President and Fellows in behalf of candidates at the elections. But a sense of honour and delicacy, and an unwillingness to sue for favours which could not be refused, soon drew from him a solemn promise to the Society, that he would no more solicit or importune them by any interference whatever.

His quiet and unambitious life in this diocese, though he enjoyed it for 18 years, leaves as little incident or anecdote to record. The [a] accidental destruction of many

[a] Many letters and papers of the Bishop bearing the signature of "*Jo. Vigorn*" were inadvertently burnt by a female relative a few years back, not supposing there could be any thing in common with such a person and "John Hough Bishop of Worcester."

letters is to be lamented, which his intimacy with many political characters of the day would have rendered highly interesting. Eminent, however, in the greatest degree for pleasantry, philanthropy, and the social virtues, he attracted the love of all around him, preserving at the same time the dignity of his station and his episcopal character. His munificence was again displayed, in adorning and rebuilding the Palace at Eccleshall, a parish strongly indebted to him for his charities and much pious exhortation from the pulpit, and in annexing a living to the Deanery of Litchfield, then filled by Mr. Addison's father.

In 1702, the fifty-first year of his age, he married a Warwickshire lady, of the family of Fisher, widow of Sir Charles Lee, of whom he was deprived by death twenty years after. The happiness of this connection increased the severity of his loss: his respect for her memory may be conjectured, from his keeping the anniversary of her death with religious veneration and a fast, even to the latest period of his life: and that she was endowed with many estimable qualities appears from the lines which he wrote, and which were afterwards in-

scribed on a small medallion of her on his own monument in Worcester cathedral. Five years before her death he had received a further translation to this latter See, having from a modest sense of his own merits and qualifications declined the Metropolitan chair, vacant by the death of Archbishop Tenison.

It was not to be expected that one so fond of a quiet and unobtrusive life in his earlier career, should now on his approach to his 70th year be disposed to enter on any active employments more than the immediate business of his station demanded. Whilst his wife was yet living, his residence in his diocese was not constant; but he still visited the metropolis on his Parliamentary duties, and the seats of many of his friends. But soon after her death, he confined himself to the sphere of his own county, narrowing the circle of his acquaintance and occupations as years crept upon him. He regularly made his triennial visitations till he attained his eightieth year, when he delivered a final charge to his Clergy, whom he always addressed with the most kind and brotherly condescension. After this he withdrew into his peaceful

retreat in the Castle of Hartlebury, where he amused his declining years with domestic society, and with a variety of improvements of his domains, on which he expended large sums, which, together with the money laid out in rebuilding the greater part of the palace at Worcester, (on the pediment of whose front his arms are impaled with those of the See,) entitle him to the thanks of his successors as one of its greatest benefactors. In this retirement from the busy world his time passed on cheerfully, enlivened by the visits of his own immediate kindred and early friends, as well as by those of the neighbouring gentry, who sought his conversation, and were always welcome to his table; of the nobility of the county, who were proud of an acquaintance with their good and venerable diocesan; and of learned men and statesmen, who were pleased with having seen this inflexible champion of British liberty. The hours of his more complete privacy were devoted to a very frequent correspondence with his nearer relatives, and many of the letters which he wrote in his decline of life are fortunately preserved. They do not indeed present us with any thing of importance in

historical fact, anecdote, or opinion, worthy of specific record. But they exhibit a specimen of epistolary writing, happy for its ease, simplicity, and elegance, which touches on the events of the day, public or domestic, in that natural and unstudied style which gives to this species of intercourse its charm and merit.

The persons with whom he principally corresponded were two ladies, Lady Kaye, and Mrs. Knightley, his relations, women of exemplary virtue and superior endowments, and the daughters of Sir Samuel Marow, and his Lady, whose funeral Sermon (now extant) the Bishop had preached in 1714 in St. James's, Westminster, where a neat monument is erected to her memory, with an epitaph by him. The letters to them, edited by Mr. Wilmot, are distinguished by the qualities we have mentioned. Breathing a spirit of peculiar kindness and affection, the occurrences of their several families and the details of private life are canvassed in them with a good humoured freedom. But they rise to a higher interest when the events which form the topics of his letters are those of affliction. It is then that the good Bishop's Christian piety, religious

feeling, and heavenly temper, shine most bright. He then pours forth his consolations in a strain of genuine eloquence, encouraging in others those hopes of a better state which he meekly cherished in himself, and which grew stronger as his body decayed. The most striking of these letters, and one unequalled in its kind, is that in which he administers comfort to one of these ladies for the loss of her eldest son at the age of twenty, just after he had been elected a Fellow of All Souls College, where his monument represents him as a youth distinguished for temper, talents, virtues, and acquirements.

Each succeeding year now in the common course of nature brought an addition, however insensible, to the infirmities which accompany age, making inroads upon a constitution never attacked by any lasting illness, and strengthened by the discipline of a temperate and well-regulated life, and by the influence of a tranquil and cheerful habit of mind. Nor did he begin to complain at all of the weight of years, or the decay of any of his bodily faculties, till he was nearly ninety. He then becomes sensible of the weakness imperceptibly stealing

upon him: and he does not fail to declare to his correspondents the weariness occasioned by his pen, the failure of his memory, and the growing inactivity of his head and hand.

On the morning of Easter Day 1741, the good old Bishop, being now in his 91st year, received, as he himself expressed it, a most merciful and most miraculous deliverance from a fire which broke out in the Castle of Hartlebury. The imminent danger which he was discovered to have been in, as well as his providential escape, made a powerful impression upon his imagination.

In the two last years of his life he still maintained his intercourse with his friends. But his infirmities became more palpable, and drew from him frequent observations on his condition. In one letter he says, that he little dreamt of living to so advanced an age, and was not solicitous to lengthen his days, for he had seen through the world, and discovered its vanity. In another he laments the indolence of old age, that his hand moved slowly, and yet his thoughts had much ado to keep pace with it. But his tone is not querulous: the retrospect of his former life, freedom from

pain or sickness, and a confident prospect of futurity, rendered him easy and contented under the apprehension of a dissolution which leisurely approached. The letters which he wrote to Mr. Lewis of Margate, to the great and good Lord Digby, to Bishop Gibson, and to Mrs. Knightley, all within six weeks of his death, at once testify the uniform tenor of his principles of piety and resignation, and the triumph of intellect over the encroachments of mortality. That addressed to the latter person, written in the most firm and perspicuous hand, is full of the sprightliness and urbanity of youth. His remarkable letter to Lord Digby, which is well known to the public, and which appears in his Life by Mr. Wilmot, and in Valentine Green's History of Worcester, of the same tone with that to Mr. Lewis, speaks in ever memorable words a language of ardent hope, that he and his friend shall meet together at the resurrection in a state of unspeakable and eternal joys. His letter to Bishop Gibson was written only four days before his death, just after he had entered his 93d year. Its chief topic is the enquiry which he made into his life on this its last

anniversary, from which he found on adding together the several items of the losses he had suffered, that little of his faculties was left to support the remainder of his existence. This, he says, I think, can be but of short duration, and I thank God, the prospect gives me no uneasiness.

The event was nearer perhaps than he expected. The year 1743 was remarkable for an epidemical distemper, which spread over the continent and this country, and for a continuance of severe weather during the spring, which proved fatal to many, particularly to persons of an advanced age. Nor could the venerable Prelate withstand it. He had ventured out during its piercing blasts, which had produced a cough, against which his constitution struggled as long as it was able: but it soon overpowered him, and on the 8th of May he breathed his last without a groan, and in peaceful resignation.

He was buried, with every token of respect from his neighbours and the clergy, in the cathedral of Worcester. Soon after his funeral, which, though at his own desire as little costly as possible, appears from the accounts preserved to have been expensive,

a most elegant and magnificent monument was there erected to his memory, from the talents of Roubiliac, the best sculptor of the age, which has been admired universally for its design and execution. It has been fully described, amongst other writers, by the historian of Worcester. The chief figures on the monument are, that of the Prelate himself, of the size of life, reclining in an easy attitude on a sarcophagus of black marble, with his countenance raised to heaven full of religious hope; and one of Religion, standing on the top of its base, having a Bible in one hand, whilst the other lifts the drapery of the Bishop, for the purpose of minutely inspecting a bas relief, the subject of which is the high Commission Court in the Hall of Magdalen College, before which the Bishop is represented as pronouncing his bold and final protest.

On the base of the monument is an English epitaph, supposed to have been written by Dr. Tottie, Canon of Christ Church, or by Dr. Smallridge, then Chancellor of the diocese, which, by the judgment of the accomplished Lord Lyttelton, was preferred to a Latin one by the learned Dr.

Friend. It dwells at great length on the history and moral excellencies of Dr. Hough, and in a tone of exalted eulogy holds him up to the love, gratitude, and imitation of his countrymen.

Persons were living within these ten years, who in their youth remembered the Bishop, among whom was Dr. Nash, the venerable historian of the county, who in his work has added his own testimony to the high character of the Prelate, who he says lived in Worcestershire for eighteen years, beloved by every one. We are indebted to his authority for another instance of the liberality of Dr. Hough, when he was applied to by the managers of one of the county institutions: he proposed to give £500; the steward made some hesitation about the means of procuring so large a sum, which the Bishop charitably construed into a doubt of its not being enough, and immediately doubled it. A similar donation of £1000 (which sum he always kept in his house in a wall in the cellar) was made by him for the building of the Church of All Saints in Worcester, where a bust of him is placed in gratitude for his munificent benefaction. Acts of

kindness and beneficence towards indigent or distressed individuals are also recorded by him, which prove that his charity was not that of ostentation. Dr. Nash has also left us a beautiful trait of the great good humour and unruffled temper of the Bishop, which displayed itself in a striking manner on the accidental destruction of a favourite barometer by one of his visitors; the notice he took of the matter was confined to this simple observation, "Do not be uneasy, Sir; I have observed this glass almost daily for upwards of seventy years, but I never saw it so low before."

This easiness of temper was by some thought to have been carried to excess, particularly in the partiality which he shewed towards his old and faithful servants. If this were a failing, it was one nearly allied to virtue, and an overflow of good feeling. Of these servants, particularly his steward and his two brothers, he speaks in his letters with invariable kindness; and he was pleased to notice them in his Will, bestowing many marks of his bounty, "in testimony of their diligence, fidelity, and affection."

It is an almost unparalleled circum-

stance, that with the exception of this, which if it were a shade the eye would refuse to see, the fame of Dr. Hough has descended pure and unsullied through each succeeding generation. Nor has one single passage of his life been brought forward which his best friends would wish to conceal, or which varies with the praises bestowed on him in his epitaph for unblemished integrity in all the relations of life in which he was engaged.

The panegyrics pronounced upon him by men of learning and virtue at every period have lost none of their freshness and truth by passing through the hands of posterity, which is wont to discern minutely, and decide impartially. The lively picture given of him by that elegant scholar Lord Lyttelton, in his fifty-sixth Persian letter, is acknowledged to be no ideal and fanciful delineation by the hand of a biassed friend, but a real and animated representation of that good and primitive Bishop. Our immortal Pope has not been silent in his praise, but he has placed him with his friend the "good Digby," with those good and brave men who are decked with everlasting trophies. Amongst other poets who

have sung to his memory, stands pre-eminent the author of the well-known Latin poem on the Immortality of the Soul, (Mr. Isaac Hawkins Browne,) to which ample justice has been done in a translation by the accomplished Mr. Soame Jenyns. His description is drawn from the life; and it was the strong impression which the personal appearance and cordiality of the Bishop made on the author's mind, that gave rise to those beautiful lines which paint him as a noble illustration of the advantages of a pious and happy old age.

Public history has consecrated his public virtues: nor have the writers of our country failed to remind us, that we are much indebted to him for the security of our reformed religion, of which he was a warm professor and unbigotted guide, and for the existence of that political liberty which we enjoy, to whose excesses he was as much opposed as he was to its depression.

It is for his moral excellencies and genuine piety, and for the constellation of virtues that raised him above other men, that Bishop Hough claims our admiration. But brilliant as they are, they do not throw

into the shade his eminent intellectual qualities, or the ornaments of his well cultivated mind. He possessed not perhaps the powerful talent and energy, which have characterised many more recent supporters of our Church amongst its spiritual governors. But his faculties were of the highest order, and his extant compositions lead us to regret that his modest and unpresuming disposition allowed him to acquiesce in that limited exertion of them, which was necessary only for the quiet path of his profession.

To his reluctance to appearing before the world as a public writer, we owe the loss of a piece of biography, for which his judgment and taste eminently qualified him, and which he originally intended to have executed. It is to be regretted that he resigned this into other hands; for there could not have been one more fit than himself to write the life of his early patron, the Duke of Ormond, to whom he was attached by a similarity of character and principle as well as friendship, and whom he had attended at his death.

The writings which he has left behind him consist chiefly of a few Charges to his

clergy, some Sermons, and a small portion of epistolary correspondence. The Sermons, preached in the reigns of William and Anne, were published at the time. They breathe throughout a spirit of Christian charity and piety, but his zeal for his religion led him sometimes to speak with warmth on the subject of popery, of whose encroachments and intriguing spirit he always entertained from experience an unceasing dread.

His style of letter-writing was on all occasions gentlemanly, polite, and friendly, without art or study. It is to be lamented that more specimens do not remain, and that so many were by accident destroyed: for though he states in a letter of late date that he was personally acquainted with few of the nobility, it is natural to believe, that his political connexions in early life, his name and character, as well as his affability and courteousness of disposition, would have attached him to many persons of similar principles in the highest stations. One letter (probably out of many) addressed by him to the daughter of the good Southampton, widow of the ill-fated Russell, has been preserved to us. It was written only

a few years before her death, when constant weeping for the untimely end of her husband had impaired her sight and memory. The Bishop "had the highest honour," as he says in another letter, "for this wise and good" woman, nor was any one better calculated than himself to alleviate the sufferings under which this exemplary wife never ceased to labour, or more disposed to it by the kindness of his heart, the warmth of his piety, and a sort of natural sympathy for the fate of her high-minded but misguided Lord. Facsimilies of two letters have been given by Mr. Wilmot; one, written in his eighty-seventh year, in which he pays just tribute to the memory of the good Queen Caroline, just then deceased; the other in his ninety-second year; both unequalled perhaps for their steadiness, firmness, and perspicuity.

Besides these, an epitaph on Lady Digby, in Coleshill church, and a few occasional prayers, scarcely any thing is handed down from the pen of the worthy Bishop.

Many portraits of him at various periods of his life are in the possession of his relatives and others. An engraving of

one, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, 1691, when he was in his fortieth year, (now in Lambeth palace,) and one of a mezzotinto by Faber, in his ninety-first year, have been published by Mr. Wilmot. The latter resemblance of his countenance fails in exhibiting that placidity and cheerfulness which his disposition would have naturally spread over it.

But whatever injustice the imbecility of art may have done him, it has been amply atoned for by the feelings of his countrymen, who have long known and appreciated his merits and virtues, and engraved them on their memories.

The time we trust is far distant, when the private rights and property of individuals, or our pure and apostolic religion, shall be again endangered by the tyranny either of despotism or of anarchy. If that unhappy hour should come, the true lover of his country cannot breathe a fitter prayer, than that a champion may arise equally qualified with Bishop Hough, by his firmness, moderation, prudence, and integrity, for the defence of its reformed church and free constitution.

And it will be no small glory to such a one, if, after gaining a triumph, he can,

without any further ambition of personal fame and distinction, withdraw himself into the calm and still retreats of private life, and, in the faithful discharge of every social duty, can spread peace and harmony amongst those around him, can secure their love and esteem, and, if it should please Heaven to extend the period of his existence beyond the usual term of mortality, can bear its infirmities with patience and resignation, and find himself as prepared at the last for his transit into another life, as was that pious and good Christian, JOHN HOUGH.

SERMONS AND CHARGES.

CHARGE

DELIVERED BY

THE BISHOP OF WORCESTER,

AT HIS FIRST VISITATION IN 1719.

My Reverend Brethren,

THE wisdom of our Church has made it our duty to meet together at stated seasons: and the business she appoints us with, the method in which we are to proceed, are so ordered, that it must be either through great mistake or great negligence on our parts, if it do not turn to her service.

I am to make enquiry into the present condition of this diocese in all respects; to put you in mind of the obligations you are under to contribute to the happy and flourishing estate of it, to the utmost of your power; and to offer you my sentiments in what manner you may most effectually do it in your several places and stations. To you the Church enjoins, that you give plain, full, and impartial answers to such articles of enquiry as the Bishop exhibits in his Visitation; that you

assist him not only as subordinate ministers, but as brethren, by giving him faithful information and friendly advice, and joining with him heartily in all prudent measures for the interest and tranquillity of our legal establishment. On me the executive part rests: and that a work of such importance may be performed by us in some degree equal to the weight of it, give me leave to go into a more particular consideration of these general hints; and may Almighty God give us grace and ability to execute them as we ought.

The Church may be considered either in the most unlimited and catholic sense, as it comprehends the whole body of believers throughout the world; or in a narrower and more restrained, as it is national. In both senses it is so far a political body, as to have laws by which it must be governed, officers, and ceremonies, and stipulations, whereby people are incorporated into, and without which they cannot become legal members of it: and for a terror to the disobedient they must know, that the refractory are liable to be disfranchised, to be cut off from the body as useless and dangerous members, and to forfeit all their share in the privileges and immunities to which the charter has entitled them. And this distinction in Christ's kingdom, the Church upon

earth, has an entire resemblance to what we find in the State, where the supreme power is extended over the whole empire, every individual is subject to the laws it enacts, has a necessary relation to and dependence upon it; but for mutual convenience the people are allowed to form themselves into fraternities and societies, which may have rules and orders distinct from each other, and a peculiar management of their own affairs, provided nothing be contrary or prejudicial to that general relation in which they stand to the supreme power.

We are ministers of Christ, we are priests in both: and as we are such in the Catholic Church, we must do all that in us lies to preserve the unity of it. First, by labouring to suppress heresy, to "banish and drive away," as the Office of Ordination expresses it, "all erroneous and false doctrines that are contrary to God's word, whereby the unity of the faith is broken:" and, secondly, by opposing all schismatical notions and doctrines, whereby unity in worship is destroyed. And whilst we are labouring to preserve the true Christian faith, and the ancient apostolical discipline, we must remember that we have the happiness to be ministers in that part of the Catholic Church, where, by the blessing and peculiar providence

of God, they have been maintained in the greatest simplicity of any other under heaven; that we are priests in the Church of England, and therefore have all the obligations that reason, conscience, and interest can lay upon us, to keep close to her sentiments; to preach the faith, not only in substance, but in words, as she has delivered it to us in her Liturgy and Articles; and to assert that form of government, which in all the essential parts of it the Church has been under from the beginning; to obey religiously her Canons and Rubrics; to perform punctually what she enjoins, and in such manner as she prescribes; and, lastly, to conform our lives to her precepts, that, as she expresses it, "we may be wholesome and godly examples, and patterns for the people to follow." We must further, as we are members of a national Church, contribute what we can to the honour, welfare, and interest of it: and in order to this, I promise myself, that you, my brethren, will be nice and scrupulous on your parts, never to recommend any persons to me for holy orders, but such as you firmly believe, nay, such as you in some measure know, to be fitly qualified; that you will faithfully inform me of such as you know neglect their duties, but especially of such as bring scandal upon their most holy profession; and, in short, that

wherever the cause of religion in general, or of our established economy in particular, is concerned, you will remember that it is and ought to be our joint care, and never fail to give me your advice and assistance, that we may act together as effectually as we can for her service. Nor must we forget, that without shameful ingratitude, and falling justly under the imputation of wanting zeal for the interest of the Church, we cannot omit or lessen our care of her patrimony. It is our duty to see that the places of public worship be supported and well repaired, and if not beautifully adorned, yet at least decently and cleanly kept; that by terriers and other legal ways provision be made that parochial rights and dues be not diminished or encroached upon. And where the maintenance is small, it will become us to consider what may be done towards the redress of this heavy grievance, this unfortunate circumstance of our otherwise happy Church; that it may appear we have a fellow feeling in the straits to which any of our brethren are reduced, and are truly members one of another.

This is the short scheme of your business and mine; and the consideration of these things is the occasion of our present meeting, and must always be the same, viz. to enquire into the state of the Church, what we may do for its

service, and how we may make ourselves most useful. But this duty is of so wide an extent, consists of so many particulars, and the circumstances of time and posture of affairs often call us so immediately to the exercise of some parts more than of others, that I think I should scarce be pertinent should I let myself out into an endless discourse upon the several heads of our business and profession: we all know that it is incumbent on us to maintain the faith in its purity, and that in order to it due measures of understanding and judgment, a prudent zeal, unblameable life, and steady conduct, are qualifications absolutely requisite. We know, likewise, that we are placed as sentinels in the Church, to guard her doctrine, discipline, and revenues; that we must oppose our utmost strength to all that attack her; and shall be answerable to God and man for whatever she may suffer in any respect through our unskilfulness, rashness, or cowardice: and therefore I would not insist or enlarge upon those things which should, and I hope do, perpetually dwell upon your minds. It is impossible for any man to have been ordained a priest, and not to remember with what solemnity he engaged himself to the discharge of that weighty employment in all its parts. How clearly and how pathetically does the office

express and set forth the several duties of the function, and with what an awful authority does it bind them upon us? And if this voice of the Church has failed to be heard, when people have attended her purposely to that end, to such deaf ears how feebly must her ministers afterwards speak! I will therefore at this time recommend to you the frequent and serious consideration of that office, and leave you to meditate on your duty there, where it is undoubtedly best taught, rather than go into the distinct consideration of the several branches of it: for if you read the prayers, administer the sacraments, preach the word, visit the sick, instruct the ignorant, and, in short, exercise your ministry as you are there directed and have undertaken to do, all will be done that can be done on your parts to edification; and if the fruits be not answerable to your labours, yet you have the comfort of a good conscience to support you; you have planted and watered, you have manured and cultivated, and you expect the increase from God, which he will certainly give if the soil be not ungrateful.

Instead therefore of expatiating on these points, let me rather consider our whole deportment, under a particular view, as it may contribute to the peace and security of our Church as by law established. That she is

beset with enemies on all sides, who envy her prosperity; that some openly assault, others secretly undermine, and all design her ruin, is undeniable; and therefore it certainly becomes us to exert ourselves, to apply our best studies and strongest endeavours in her defence: and how successfully might it be done, if God in his mercy pleased to bring us to a right understanding among ourselves, and a true estimate of our proper interest! But whilst we are divided in our judgments our hands are weakened; and though every body endeavours to clear himself of the blame, and lay the fault upon his neighbour, yet the misfortune is universal, and unless the good providence of God interposes, we may all feel the woeful effects of it.

When the Church of God was of one heart and one mind, how gloriously did it triumph over the powers of darkness! and if that part of it to which we belong were of the same heavenly temper, how little cause would she have to apprehend external attacks! She cannot be hurt but by her own children, nor can all our enemies make impression upon us, unless they gain over our passions to their side. And since this is confessedly our case, and agreed to be so on all hands, let us, if you please, see how princes and states defend themselves; let

us consider some of those rules which secular wisdom and experience have established; and I am confident it will not be time lost if we make it the subject of our most serious thoughts, how far they may be of use and service to ourselves, and how fitly they may be adapted to the use of the sanctuary.

And, in the first place, when princes and states are provoked by their neighbours, find their interests opposed, and their quiet disturbed, the most immediate and most natural reflection is, who and how many their enemies are, what is their strength, and wherein it chiefly consists: for by this means a due estimate is made of the enemy's force, they can judge what proportion it bears to their own, and can suit their provisions to the exigence of their occasions. This hinders them from being either possessed with unreasonable fears and apprehensions, or brought into a despicable conceit of the enemy's power, the effects whereof have been equally fatal. Without this it is impossible not to be subject to mistakes, and the mischievous consequences of them; for unless he that goes to war with ten thousand sits down and computes how he may meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand, the engagement will be very unequal, and in all probability will end in the ruin of the infe-

rior number. But there is something else to be thought on than just the bare number of the enemy, which is more or less to be regarded according to his other circumstances. An inexperienced multitude is of little force against disciplined troops; want of skill to use them often makes their arms and their courage useless; they fall into disorder and confusion, without knowing how to oppose or avoid danger; and the victory over them is many times so cheap, that it might more properly be called a slaughter than a conquest. But supposing there be no want of skill or conduct, yet if the force be confederate, drawn together from several quarters, and agreed in one common design, but for different ends and with different aims, we have too much experience how slowly such a confederacy carries on the general interest, how easily it is weakened by jealousy and suspicions and secret insinuations, how apt to be divided and broken by proposals of advantage to particular parties above what they can promise to themselves in the common success, how difficultly they are brought to agreement in their counsels, how backward they are to execute them afterwards, and how almost impossible it is to keep them secret, in which the very life and soul of enterprize lies; how solicitous the several parties are to save

themselves, and throw the weight and stress of business upon others; in short, how much they are possessed with private interest, and how little they are concerned for others, where they cannot hope to find their own particular accounts. These and many other inconveniences are found in measures concerted between different powers independent of each other; enough (where necessity and self-preservation does not bring them together) to discourage the most sanguine and the most resolved from entering into them: but where art and strength and experience are united under a single direction—where all are subject to reproof or commendation, reward or punishment—have no temptations to draw them off from the service, and all their hopes terminate in it—where the whole design is one and of a piece, and all endeavours directed to the accomplishment of it—there we may assure ourselves the counsels will be deliberate and weighty, the determinations close, and the execution vigorous.

But then, secondly, when the power and strength of an enemy is discovered, it is the common practice, and prudence requires it, to dispose and apply your own force accordingly; to double the guard where you are hardest pressed, and where less danger appears there to ease yourself. Not that a want of care and

circumspection ought to be on any side, for a breach is easily made where the attempts are slighted: but things must be estimated and considered as they are in themselves, lest too great a solicitude on one side expose the other to inevitable danger. Upon this reason it is that a false alarm is one of the oldest stratagems in war; for if the enemy can be startled with unreasonable apprehensions, and be prevailed upon to fix his eyes one way, he may without much difficulty be set upon behind, and will find little comfort in the reflection, that he might have been a match for his adversary if he had looked about him. Troops, we are told, are in the best posture either of defending themselves or making impression on the enemy, when they keep in a body close and entire; for then they are able to bear the shock, can turn to every side with ease, as the occasion requires, and the whole strength is ready to obey the call: but sallies are greater arguments of spirit than of conduct, and if they are baffled by repulse, it is not without difficulty they return into order.

A third maxim in war is always to suspect the appearance of kindness in the enemy, for nothing is so certain as that none is intended. Ἐχθρῆ δῶρον ἄδωρον is a proverb of above two thousand years standing; and though an enemy

may be supposed to desire peace, and make reasonable advances towards it, may discover a fair and just inclination to a quiet and amicable conclusion of differences, and by generous actions offer proofs of it; yet an enemy continuing in the state of an enemy, keeping up unjust pretensions, and insisting upon claims that are unwarrantable, cannot be supposed to do or to design a good office. It is altogether unnatural, it is inconsistent with his principles; and if he should prevail so far as to be thought sincere, he would not only make advantage of that credulity, but laugh at and despise it when his turn was served. No danger can exceed that of being betrayed into a false security; for an unexpected stroke is almost unavoidable; it carries surprise and terror along with it, and renders all the preparations of defence useless that are not accompanied with resolution, circumspection, and presence of mind: for he that can be thought to mean well, has so far got within you; he enters by degrees into your confidence, steals away your distrust, and when he has brought you to be off your guard, his malice executes itself with small and weak opposition.

A fourth and the last thing I shall mention, which people who stand upon their own defence should above all others be careful of, is

to prevent misunderstandings among themselves; to be deaf to insinuations and surmises that may raise jealousies, and alienate their minds from each other; for this not only makes them an easy prey to their enemies, but will leave behind it the bitter reflection, that it was owing to their own folly. When their mutual confidence is lost, the breach will widen of itself; every little matter will be looked on in the worst light, and have the worst turn given to it; their spirits will be every day more and more exasperated, till their difference at last grows into a direct enmity, and they assault each other with more severity and spite, than the hatred or ill-nature of their enemies could suggest. How many instances of this do profane and ecclesiastical histories afford us? What a dreadful schism and what bloody disorders were occasioned by that trifling dispute about the observation of Easter? which the parties were at last brought to fancy was of equal moment to an article of faith: they made eternity depend upon it; would not be persuaded that they who differed from them in the time of keeping this feast could possibly be orthodox in any thing else; and when they came to entertain these sentiments of their brethren, they thought they might use them afterwards as they pleased; that they had no

longer a right to be treated as Christians or as men, but had forfeited their claim to justice and charity, and were only the objects of a zealous indignation. To what an outrageous height did the Jews carry their differences in the fatal siege and destruction of Jerusalem? and how little did they regard the general safety, when their breasts were throughly heated with their own quarrels? Revenge and hatred not only exceeded, but seemed entirely to have extinguished the principle of self-preservation, insomuch that they were sheathing their swords in each other's bowels, and firing the houses over their heads, at the very time when the Romans were scaling their walls.

And now, my dear brethren, I am very confident, that the particular application of what I have said is not so obscure, but that you have all made it as you have gone along with me: yet, to prevent mistakes, I will take the liberty to explain myself, for it is always worth while to spend a few more words than perhaps are absolutely necessary, in order to be rightly understood. If therefore the first rule be a wise one, that when there are many enemies we should consider them distinctly, calculate their strength apart, and look upon them and guard against them as they are more or less formidable in themselves; then without contradic-

tion the tyranny and ambition of Rome will first fall under our notice. Here we see force, and subtilty, and artifice, indefatigable industry, and restless malice, firmly combined under a despotic power, and all set upon the ruin and extirpation of our religion. The Church of England is above all others the mark of her hatred; her enmity to it is fixed and unchangeable, and she sticks at no means to accomplish its subversion. No disappointments can make her pause; neither shame nor remorse can touch her; but after a thousand baffled plots, she goes on to frame more; and after the most signal repulses, renews again the attacks. She knows that our Church is the bulwark of the Reformation: that England makes the most resolute opposition to spiritual and temporal tyranny, and that it is here oppressed truth and liberty seek refuge; and therefore she storms and undermines, and by all imaginable methods assaults this fortress, in confidence that having once gained or destroyed it, the remaining part of her work would be easy. The Northern heresy would fall of course. Such an enemy as this is indeed very dreadful; we cannot reflect upon her power and her rage, but it strikes us with amazement to think that we subsist. It is wonderful that at some time or other she has

not swallowed us up quick, since her wrathful displeasure against us is without bounds or intermission: and she would certainly long since have done it, if the Lord himself had not been on our side: but his arm has appeared mighty in our deliverance, his eye has been ever watchful over us; he has never forsaken us, and in him we trust that he will still deliver us. Yet he looks that we should likewise take care of ourselves; and as he has never failed miraculously to interpose, where our own natural powers have been insufficient for our defence, so he expects we should use those powers as far as they will go, nor allows us to rely upon his interposition but in concurrence with our own sincere, however feeble, endeavours. But we must not only look upon Popery as the most powerful, but also as the most deceitful and treacherous enemy to our constitution. Wherever it is attacked, we must expect to find her there: she can disguise herself in any shape, preach any doctrine that may do us hurt, and mix herself with dissenters of all denominations, to help forward their childish disgusts, their ignorance, and their madness, with her more refined subtilty and malice. I do not speak this as if I imagined all were Popery, and the only opposition to our Church came from thence; but if God for

our sins shall suffer this Church, the most apostolical in the world both for doctrine and discipline, to be distressed and brought low, let the fatal mischief come from what quarter soever, I will adventure to say all will end in Popery. And the perversest of the dissenters, who so falsely and foolishly have charged us with too near approaches to Rome, will find themselves to have been all along her instruments and tools in reducing themselves and us to her subjection. They are enemies therefore, and enemies whom we cannot keep too watchful an eye upon. Nay, they are enemies, who, if they will be true to themselves and their own avowed principles, (and we justly suspect men when they pretend otherwise,) must intend nothing less than the ruin of our establishment. They must endeavour to subvert at least the order of its government, in which the formality of it consists. But these enemies, how ill inclined soever, are not so dangerous as the other; they are at worst but confederates without a common head; and very ill agreed amongst themselves: neither their policy to contrive, nor their power to execute, are so much to be dreaded; and we may, and with the blessing of God shall, keep our ground against them, without needing to fall off our guard on the other side.

But however we are treated either by papists or dissenters, methinks it should not set us who are sincere members of the Church of England at odds amongst ourselves. Their pretending to serve and caress on this side and on that, should not make us give them the pleasure of seeing the plot take, should not make us vilify and suspect each other; yet God knows it has in too great a measure had this sad effect: and unless God in his infinite goodness shall please to inspire us with juster thoughts and kinder inclinations towards each other, one dreads to look forward to the end of our present differences, which may be as bad as our enemies could wish it, without giving them the trouble to be more than lookers on. I need not tell you, my brethren, how much the Prince, with whom God has blessed us on the throne, recommends peace and unanimity to us all, as the only bottom on which our security can stand. He, in the religious as well as the political sense, is the head and protector of our Church, and whatever may be suggested by the worst of her enemies, will never be wanting to make good the character. If as the governor and father of all his people he desires they all should share in the blessings of his reign, and be as easy as the common welfare will allow, both in their temporal and

spiritual estate, it is what every good Christian ought to join with him in, and be thankful for. A toleration to dissenters, as far as may consist with the safety of the Established Church, is what at some time or other has been esteemed and declared reasonable by those who would be looked upon as the most zealously affected to it. When Popery hovered over our heads, and we saw ourselves upon the very brink of ruin, many yet living know how ardently a better understanding amongst Protestants of all denominations was desired, as the most likely means to strengthen our hands against a power, which was then thought equally to aim at the destruction of us all. This desire was not only the subject of private conversations and serious debates, but the best and most learned of our Clergy were free to express their hope of seeing it accomplished, from the pulpit and from the press: and I appeal to the consciences of all who remember that time, whether the dissenters were not encouraged to expect a toleration, when the nation should be in so happy a state as to be able to give it. That time came, and a toleration was granted; but some restraints were put upon it afterwards, and these have lately been removed: let none suspect that this is the result of partiality, or any thing but wisdom and

goodness in his Majesty, who is ours by judgment and inclination, and will inviolably preserve the Church in all her rights: and if ever any thing should be asked of him prejudicial to her real interest, he would not only be found deaf to such petitions, but unalterable in his resolutions to maintain and defend her. But his endeavours must be fruitless without our concurrence: he cannot save us, in spite of our teeth, nor can the wisest measures take effect to our advantage, if they find us in a disposition to resist their influence. Let us therefore, my brethren, not suffer ourselves to be alarmed with dangers to the Church from a quarter whence, morally speaking, they can never come. Let us not be deluded with suspicions, that the hands in which the legislature rests will ever contribute to pull down the Church, of which almost every individual is a professed member. Let us not be persuaded, that persons who wait at the altar, and have in the most solemn manner engaged themselves to assert the doctrine and discipline of our Church; let us not, I say, be easily persuaded, that they are either so foolish as not to discern what is for their own interest, or so base as to betray it. In short, let us not be imposed upon by odious characters, and names of distinction; and if fears, and jealousies, and suspi-

cions, cannot entirely be suppressed, yet let not charity be lost amongst us. Let our passions never carry us so far, but that we may always remember ourselves to be brethren, and always be ready to join in prayer to Almighty God, that he would bless and protect and prosper our Church; that he would disappoint the malice of all our enemies, strengthen the hands of our friends, and enlarge their hearts to do us good; and that he would give us grace, whom he has been pleased to call to his more immediate service, so to discharge the duties of our several places, as may secure the tranquillity of our minds, and our future hopes, however they be understood or accepted in this life. Amen.

CHARGE

DELIVERED AT

THE SECOND TRIENNIAL VISITATION

IN 1722.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

SINCE it has pleased God to give us this opportunity of meeting together, it becomes us to make use of it as effectually as we can for his service; that service which we all have obliged ourselves to make the business of our lives, and which we are most likely to be successful in, when we act by mutual advice and concurrence. I ought not to question but that every one of you is forward to discharge the duties of his place, and to shew that he is animated with a true Christian spirit, and has warm affections where the interest of religion in general, or of our ecclesiastical establishment in particular, is concerned; and I should think myself in a great measure superseded in my present business, if the canons of the Church had not bound it upon me, and made it a part

of my duty to suggest to you in what manner I conceive you ought to perform yours; and when I consider further St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy, written by the pen of one divinely inspired, and to one who we well might suppose should very little have needed such instruction, I am convinced that we ought to acquiesce in the wisdom of our Church, and not to presume any thing improper or unnecessary which she has commanded to be done.

This Epistle may in the strictest propriety of the word be called a charge: and the Apostle esteemed it of such importance, that he would not respite or delay it, though he expected to converse personally with Timothy in a short time after: yet this did not hinder him from sending to him in the mean season some short hints, a sketch of his business; and if we are tempted to imagine he might have spared his pains to one educated in the Christian principles from his infancy, promoted to the episcopal office by prophecy, the peculiar designation of the holy Spirit, which necessarily implies his knowing and being qualified for the duty of his place; if, I say, these considerations may make us fancy there was less occasion for this Epistle, St. Paul you see is of another mind; he knew Timothy's endowments and graces; it is from him we learn the character of

that excellent person; but yet he writes and gives this express reason for it, "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Not as if he did not know it before, but he is here presented with it again, and must not think it needless to have his memory refreshed; for in so weighty a commission as he was entrusted with, how completely soever he was qualified for it, yet he could not too often be put in mind of his duty, nor have too many motives to excite his industry and zeal in the service.

By the house of God, we are in no danger of apprehending that St. Paul meant the place where the Christians assembled for the public exercise of religious worship: such places we, and they that went before us, have long enjoyed; places contrived for, and dedicated to, that use: and it is requisite we should know and always bear in mind, how we ought to behave ourselves in them; considering that they do in a peculiar manner belong to God; that we enter them on purpose to address ourselves to the Divine Majesty; and if we lose that awful apprehension, which ought to accompany us there, are in danger of offering the sacrifice of fools. But as in those early days

the Christian disciples were forced to assemble as they had convenience and opportunity, sometimes in the open air, and for the most part in some private room of a believer's house; so St. Paul has prevented any mistake we might fall into about the house of God, by subjoining immediately the following words, as explanative of the former; "which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Now this could not be the walls, but the congregation met within them; those followers of Christ, who had listed themselves into his service, who had taken up the banner of the cross, and who themselves were or ought to be that house of God, which had strength enough to support the faith.

To be the pillar and ground of truth is an high character, and comes very near to a divine attribute; and therefore I think we cannot better be employed than in considering to what or to whom it may belong. But I will take the liberty first briefly to survey this Epistle, and see what those instructions were which St. Paul thought requisite immediately to furnish his son Timothy with; and then come to the forementioned consideration, which is of no small importance to be rightly understood. And the first order he gives him is in the third verse of the first chapter, and is no more than

what he left with him at their last parting, that he should exert his authority over some that pretended to preach the Gospel, and keep them to the orthodox doctrine in faith and manners. It is impossible for any body to read Irenæus, and not be of Dr. Hammond's opinion, that the apostle here had the Gnosticks in his eye; their insolent pretence to light and knowledge above others; their senseless unaccountable notions in philosophy; their unintelligible doctrine of the αἰῶνες; their mysterious account of the several ranks and orders of superior beings; their whimsical interpretation of the Mosaical Law; their detestable mixture of the impure heathenish rites with those appointed by Christ; and, above all, the impudent and vain conceit of their being the peculiar favourites of heaven, are so expressly pointed at, that we could not be more assured who he meant if he had named them. Timothy therefore is to inhibit the preachers of these pernicious doctrines, to oblige them to teach the truth in simplicity, and to recommend purity of life both by their precepts and examples: if his admonitions and reproofs were ineffectual; if they undervalued his person, or, reflecting upon his youth, thought themselves masters of more learning and judgment than he ought to pretend to; they must

be dealt with in a more authoritative way. He must not suffer himself to be insulted, but exert the power that was vested in him, silence the perverse and obstinate, and make them feel the weight of his censures.

A second instruction relates to divine service; that prayers should be made for all men, according to the unlimited rule of charity, and the design of God in the work of our redemption, who would have all men to be saved; that what was done in the congregation at their usual meetings should be with order and decency; and that such as came thither should suit themselves to the gravity of the business they were about, in habit and deportment. This is the substance of the second chapter. The third is taken up in describing the qualifications that a minister of the Gospel, whether bishop, priest, or deacon, ought to be endowed with; which are in short, that he should be sound in doctrine, upright in life, and of general good repute; and this is the whole of what precedes the words I quoted, and does indeed comprise the whole of our duty. For as we are officers in God's church, and his ministers, according to the measure of power that is given us, we must (as the office of ordering priests expresses it) be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all

erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word. Observe, my brethren, the benign temper of our truly Christian Church; she commands to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, and it were impious not to obey her; but as for the erring persons, she does not immediately discard them, and renounce her relation to them; we are not presently to fall on them, and treat them as enemies, but as mistaken weak brethren; she gives them leisure to recollect their follies and false reasonings; they may in the spirit of meekness be brought to a right mind, may repent, may reform themselves, nay, may be happy instruments of converting others, and bringing them into the way of truth. Cutting off an unsound member to secure the body is the last remedy, when all attempts to heal it are ineffectual, and is never to be practised but with reluctancy. This is the tender disposition of our mother, the Church of England, who is always pleased to reclaim, and never hasty to cast off, her offending children; but in the Church of Rome another spirit reigns. Slow measures are not calculated for the doctrine of implicit obedience; she disdains to argue, and is impatient of opposition or contradiction: and accordingly in that oath which she imposes upon a bishop at his ordination,

we have no mention of disputing with, or labouring to convince, gainsayers; but he roundly undertakes the most compendious way to persecute heretics, schismatics, and all that oppose the papal authority, to the utmost of his power. The express words in the oath are, hereticos, scismaticos, et rebelles Domino nostro papæ vel successoribus ejus, pro posse persequar, et impugnabo. But we, blessed be God, have not so learned Christ; and, to sum up St. Paul's admonitions in short, we must not only maintain the faith in its purity, but employ our utmost care that the service of the Church be regularly performed, that all persons behave themselves there as they ought to do, and that all things be done to edification. This, as we are considered in a public ministerial capacity, is incumbent on us. But we have likewise the conduct of ourselves to account for; and if we would be thought worthy of the part we have in the ministry, it must appear that we are sober, chaste, and temperate; meek, patient, and liberal; diligent and well instructed in our business; knowing what we are to do, and how to go about it; in a word, that, as far as is possible, we endeavour to be every thing that is virtuous, wise, and good; to give the most prevailing force of example and address to our advices and reproofs. Thus the man of

God should be perfected, thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and then we may expect he will behave himself as he ought to do in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.

By the Church, as I before observed, is here undoubtedly meant the congregation of the faithful at Ephesus, and throughout all Asia, as far as Timothy's jurisdiction extended; it cannot possibly be understood of the universal Church, because he is ordered to exercise such authority in it, as he had no warrant nor pretence to do but within his own district: and I make this remark, because the Romanists urge this text, and lay no small stress upon it, to justify their claim to infallibility. But if the Church here spoken of be a particular Church, themselves own it may fall into the most desperate errors: if it be not, it is undeniable that Timothy has such a power given him in it, as they will only allow to the universal Bishop, as they affect to call him, the Roman Pontiff, and his successors. But it is, say they, the pillar and ground of truth, the Spirit of God calls it so; and since it is manifest that particular Churches have fallen and may fall into damnable errors, we must understand the Church of Ephesus in this place to be spoken of as a part only of the Catholic Church; but this will

not, cannot be granted ; for the Church that is committed to Timothy's care and authority, that is the Church which is here averred to be the pillar and ground of truth. Now if we shall come after this to affirm, that it could only so be called as it was a part of the Church universal, this glorious privilege of being the pillar of truth dwindles to nothing ; it may notwithstanding fall into a multitude of dangerous errors, nay, finally fall from the truth itself. Right, say they, we readily allow it ; this very Church in a great measure did so, and for this reason it is that we call upon you to interpret the text as we do. But before we submit our judgment to theirs, in a point of such infinite concern, the very basis of which their claim to an uncontrollable power of dictating to us in religion as they please is bottomed, let us see whether they do not impose upon us by an unreasonable postulatum, requiring us to take for granted what they can never prove, that the Church being here affirmed to be the pillar and ground of truth, must therefore be presumed to have infallibility in it : for how do these words στύλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας, the pillar and ground, or rather pedestal, of truth, carry infallibility along with them ? They are here metaphorically applied to the Church, and import, that as in an-

cient buildings, particularly in the idol temples, (as we find it in that where Samson and the Philistines perished,) there was one or more pillars whereon the whole fabric rested; so amidst the vast variety of religions and philosophical schemes, which men had framed and erected to themselves, truth only was to be found in that form of sound doctrine, which Christ delivered to his Church: and that such a society of men as the Church was, united in such principles, and under such an economy, was the surest support of it. But a pillar may be undermined, or become weak through age, and the injuries of time, and sink under the superstructure that is upon it; so the Church, as it denotes a visible society, is subject to error. Clergy and laity, officers and others, every one of them, I say, is liable to mistake and ignorance, to prejudice and passion, to fraud and deceit: they may be false to the trust reposed in them, or may be imposed upon and embrace error for truth. But the Church, notwithstanding all this, is, and from the beginning of Christianity always has been, the pillar and ground of truth, in the truest and fullest notion of the words; not by having infallibility lodged in any one or any number of its members, but by being so framed, as that the sacred depositum, the faith once delivered

to the saints, the Gospel of truth, should be preserved and safely delivered down to us by the Church through all succeeding ages; and which shews the wonderful and overruling power of Providence, though it has often passed through wicked hands, and such as have been professed enemies to it, yet it has descended to us in all the essential parts pure and uncorrupt. Heretics and schismatics have invented comments and glosses to justify their own absurd principles and practices, but they have not dared to corrupt the text, or when they have sometimes attempted, have never succeeded in it.

The Scriptures still speak to us their own genuine sense, and in their own words, without any great or material variations; and he that comes to them with an honest and upright heart, will find no difficulty in understanding them, where his eternal interest is most concerned: and it is, I presume, in this sense we are to understand, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church, i. e. the devil and his agents shall never be able to deprive it of the Gospel, or to corrupt it: and so long as we have that safe in our hands, it is impossible mankind should universally fall under such a stupid indifference towards it, but that there will be many who will take their

belief from thence, and frame their lives according to the manifest dictates of it. And this, as I mentioned above, is owing to the wonderful wisdom and goodness of God, in putting his Church under such an economy, as would oblige the officers of it to preserve the truth entire, many times in contradiction to their own principles and practices: for by giving the apostles a coordinate power, the Churches they planted became independent (as to jurisdiction) of each other; and by appointing a subordination of ministers in the respective Churches, they not only were mutually assisting to each other in preserving the truth, but were checks upon each other when any one of them made an attempt to deprave it. And this exposition of the words agrees entirely with the occasion of St. Paul's making use of them; his advice is, not to regard the fabulous and pompous stories with which the idol worshippers endeavoured to set off the mysteries of their religion; not to mind their endless genealogies and nonsensical accounts of superior beings; not to be deluded with the specious pretence of learning and of science, which he assures them was falsely so called; for if in any of these things there was an appearance of probability, yet no certainty could be arrived at; they only gave rise to unneces-

sary disputes and contentions, which created heats and animosities among them to the breach of charity, but never led to any real improvement. He therefore commands him to stick close to the doctrine of the Church; there he would find the truth lie before him in plain and easy and intelligible notions and words: no difficulties would perplex him, nor any canting terms confound his understanding; but he should with benefit and pleasure know all that was requisite. For the Church was the pillar and ground of truth; there it was preserved in the greatest purity, neither mixed with errors, nor wrapped up in obscurity: not as if the members of the Church, even the chiefest of them, whether singly or collectively considered, were not liable to deceive or be deceived; but God had so framed and modelled his Church, that it should always to the end of the world support the truth of the Gospel unshaken, even in this Church of Ephesus. And at this very time, when St. Paul calls it the pillar and ground of truth, there were some of the falsest teachers in the world; but the truth stood firm in spite of them; and would have done so, how much soever their errors and mistakes, their industry to make proselytes to and propagate them, or their numbers to countenance them, had increased; and the

most miraculous instance of this, is the Church of Rome. We know there was a time, when almost the whole Christian world was under the yoke of her tyranny; when her false idolatrous principles and practices every where took place, and every body embraced, or at least durst not oppose, them. It is manifest she was convinced at that very time that she acted in contradiction to the rule of faith, and therefore she kept it in all the obscurity imaginable: the people were prohibited to read, and were made believe it was dangerous to meddle with it; they would not suffer it to speak in the known language of any country, but kept it concealed under such an one as the people did not understand; even bishops lived and died without a sight of it: yet all this while she kept it safe; till it fell into the hands of those that read and studied it, who thereby came to a sight of her falsehood and hypocrisy, and shook her off. She struck the second Commandment out of her Catechisms; and because the number of ten was known to the meanest of the vulgar, she absurdly split the tenth into two: but in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, the ten stood in their order, stared them in the face, and upbraided their shameless prevarication; yet they durst not touch them. She suffers no public, nor will-

ingly private devotions, but in the Latin tongue only; which, generally speaking, the women and common people pretend not to understand. How gladly would she have made this practice more agreeable to the doctrine of St. Paul! She does not want inclination to have him on her side; for where she fancies the Scriptures favour her, she is very liberal in giving them even more authority than they claim. Witness the stress she lays on those passages which seem in sound to countenance transubstantiation; there it is sacrilege to interpret against the latter, though in defiance to reason and our senses; both must in this case be given up, rather than admit of an exposition that would reconcile it to both. But the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians was stubborn, and would not give way: for which, and for other passages in St. Paul's Epistles very repugnant to many popish doctrines and usages, which that Church is particularly fond of, some of her celebrated writers have not been able to conceal their good will to lessen his authority.

I hope I am not thought tedious, in labouring to maintain such an interpretation of the words I have often repeated, as seem most agreeable to the common sense of mankind, and to the intention of the writer himself; for

it is of infinite concern to us to know where truth is to be found; and it is of no small importance to know where it is not: but I forbear to prosecute this subject any further, and choose rather to close with application to ourselves. We have here a house of God, a Church of the living God, a large district, a numerous people committed to our care, and every one of you has a share in the governing part: permit me therefore to be now in St. Paul's stead to you, and to beseech every one of you to look to your behaviour in this house of God; to take the utmost care both of doctrine and discipline to see that the people be rightly instructed, and that the public service be performed regularly and devoutly, as the Church has ordained; and, above all, to be diligent to improve yourselves in all those graces and good qualities, that are necessary ingredients in the composition of a clergyman. Let nobody surmise that I suspect any of you to be negligent in the duties of his place, or defective in abilities to perform it, though I thus speak. St. Paul was far from having such opinion of his son Timothy; yet esteemed it reasonable however to excite and quicken his zeal; to stir up, as he expresses it, the grace of God that was in him; and I have no fear

that I shall assume too much whilst I act in conformity to so great an example.

May it please Almighty God to keep us all under such a lively sense of the business we have undertaken, the great difficulty of performing it well, the irreparable damage the Church will sustain if we do not, and the dreadful account we must one day give of our stewardship; may, I say, these considerations so thoroughly possess us, as to have their full effect; and then we may promise ourselves some comfort in seeing the fruits of our labours; constant peace of mind in the result of a good conscience, and have a reasonable well grounded hope, through the merits of Christ, that, notwithstanding all our weaknesses and imperfections, it will hereafter be said to every one of us, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!

CHARGE

DELIVERED AT

THE THIRD TRIENNIAL VISITATION

IN 1725.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

THIS is the third time that it has pleased God to give me the opportunity of meeting with you, and, on my part, I can truly say, it is with pleasure; for as the business enjoined us by the Church, and to which our own consciences, and I trust our inclinations, lead us, is to consult among ourselves of the best methods for the orderly discharge of our respective duties, and to think how we may regulate any thing that is amiss; my comfort arises from this last article, that I find very little occasion of speaking to it. I cannot say that I have heard of no person who may have given cause of complaint against him; I cannot say that every thing and in every place has been rightly done, or at least rightly understood: for in such a number as our body

consists of, there may perhaps be one or two who forget themselves and their sacred character; there may in this or that person be a predominant passion that gives offence, and some through indisposition, or justifiable avocation, may be thought negligent, and blamed without cause; and in this sublunary state it always and unavoidably will be so. But I can say, and I bless God for it, that I do not hear but there is a good spirit in general reigns among us, which disposes us to promote the Christian principles, together with the true honour and interest of our established Church, in the way that our Lord himself has directed, in meekness and patience, and with a just regard to that peace and amity which we are religiously to cultivate with all men. For I do not hear, my brethren, but that you are well and deservedly esteemed in your several cures; and I am sure, I have no cause to complain of your behaviour towards myself. This being our happy condition, I have no reason to dwell upon the inquisitive and most ungrateful part of my business: and it remains only that I offer you something of my thoughts, how we may go on to improve ourselves, and to serve God in our respective stations. For a commendable conduct in our affairs does not imply but that in one part or other they may

still be better carried on: good dispositions grow into habits by practice; and experience not only creates facility in business, but we come to discover it where our care is most wanted, and where we may apply it to the best purpose. St. Paul, the most indefatigable of all the apostles, notwithstanding all his pains and all his sufferings, tells us to still press forward; and the prize he had in view animated him to encounter the utmost difficulties, under the support of that unspeakable comfort of an inward assurance, that his Master approved, and would give him success.

The topics of discourse upon the subject of our labours are more than can easily be enumerated, and every one of eternal importance. For what is the business we have undertaken? To wrestle not against flesh and blood; not with men who are weak, and frail, and like ourselves; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, i. e. against our ghostly adversary and his host. And, as St. Chrysostom remarks, if such are our enemies, formed troops (if I may so speak) of spiritual and invisible beings, full of malice and envy, full of subtilty and fraud, perpetually assaulting and undermining, and by all imaginable methods contriv-

ing and labouring to compass our ruin; how ought we to be armed at all points, to be watchful, and ever upon our guard? But for whose sake do we enter into this formidable contest? Who is our Captain, and under whose banner do we engage? It is our blessed Redeemer that leads us on; and it is in the service of his Church, that Church which he has purchased with his most precious blood, and which we must answer for at the peril of our own; and this reflection quiets our apprehensions, and raises our courage. We may and ought to follow with alacrity a Leader, who is infinitely superior to all opposition, and will certainly overcome; but still remembering that on our parts all our studies, all our thoughts, and all our pains are demanded; and that the great variety of instances, wherein these are to be employed, make the sacerdotal office the most difficult to which men can possibly apply themselves.

To be successful in our calling, and approve ourselves to God in the discharge of it, we must have qualities that seldom meet together, and must at all times be in a disposition to exercise them; for the Church has variety of seasons, the posture of her affairs frequently alters, and the change of circumstances will make it necessary for us to change our con-

duct. We must indeed put on the whole armour of God, and endeavour to be completely furnished with all the Christian virtues; but all are not equally useful at all times; occasion and circumstance must direct the weapon that is most proper, and the use that is to be made of it; for sometimes we must attack, at others it is sufficient to keep our ground, and there are times when it will be reasonable to give way: and if we act injudiciously, our courage may shew itself, when prudence would restrain it; we may press inconsiderately, when caution is more requisite; and we may halt and give back, when it is our duty to charge. Patience, and meekness, and long-suffering, and forbearance, are the virtues to the exercise of which the ministers of the Gospel find themselves most frequently called; but zeal and spirit, and asserting the dignity and authority of our character, have likewise their time and place, and will avail and make their way, where the former would be feeble and overborne. But to exert these properly and usefully requires a great measure of prudence, and the utmost degree of application and attention. For it is no easy matter to get the better of our own passions, they will always be struggling; corrupt nature is on their side, and grace only can subdue them. What must we think then, when we

find ourselves opposed in every step of our business by the passions, ignorance, obstinacy, prepossessions, and (which is harder to be dealt with than all the rest) the interest of other men? with what dexterity must we perform our part, to have any reasonable hope of success in our endeavours to serve, convince, and convert the world under such discouragements? Our Saviour for this reason directs his disciples to take care that their innocency be always under the guard of wisdom, which is so absolutely necessary in the practical part of life, but especially in our profession, that there is scarce a virtue that does not lose its name or its effect without it. Courage unseasonably used, or ill directed, or carried to excess, degenerates into rashness and savage force: on the other hand, low, and mean, and unreasonable condescension may affect to pass for meekness, but will never deserve the name: a just authority may in the exercise be turned into cruelty, and there may be likewise a criminal lenity which will render that authority insignificant and despicable.

Since so much then depends upon the manner and measure of our actions, give me leave to consider the parochial care in some of the chief heads of it, and to offer you my opinion how you may behave yourselves respectively

with most likelihood of doing good to others, and reflecting upon your ministry with a just inward complacency and joy. And the first thing we may consider is reading of prayers and administration of the Sacraments, which I doubt not but you strictly perform according to the rule that lies before you, the Rubric and Canons of our Church. Frequent communion, and frequency in public prayer beyond what is enjoined, is much to be desired; and the Church depends upon your discretion and sincerity in this point; that where a constant congregation can be had, and where it may tend to edification, there will be no backwardness on your part; and in the performance of these offices an easy deliberate gravity, due emphasis, and proper cadence, are very requisite to keep up the attention and devotion of the people: for we shall not easily move their hearts, if our own do not appear to be warmly affected; and unless they can discern by our behaviour that we know ourselves to be in the presence of God, and immediately addressing to the awful Majesty of heaven, it will be too strong a temptation to them to offer the sacrifice of fools. It must be allowed, that a good voice, a discerning ear, upon which emphasis depends, and a graceful manner in reading, are not talents that every body can arrive at;

they are not to be gained by art or study, but are rather to be looked upon as gifts of nature; improvable indeed by observation and reflection, but never to be well attained, where they are not found in some degree beforehand. However, it is in every man's power to read distinctly and devoutly; and considering himself as the mouth of the congregation, he must needs know, that they for whom he speaks will think themselves wronged in having their petitions so presented; and he cannot but confess himself justly to fall under their censure. For an heedless precipitancy is always disagreeable; a man very often loses by it his own attention, and certainly outruns that of other people; it looks as if he were performing the drudgery of a task, rather than an act of devotion; and they who favour neither us nor our forms, will say such a reader is glad when he is got through them. But there is an error on the other hand which is equally offensive, and that is an affected singularity in voice or tone; for as eagerness and haste imply want of devotion, this seems to discover too much pretence to it, as if there were an eye to the praise of men, whilst the only care should be to obtain the praise of God: in short, a becoming decency is what we ought to study, and sincerity should always sit close at our hearts.

Though, to speak plainly, if this were wanting, if a priest had no regard beyond his own credit and reputation, yet that should make him extremely careful of his whole demeanor in the public offices, that every thing be agreeable to the dignity and nature of them, and that he appear to have a just sense of what he is about; for negligence, or the least appearance of irreligion, in a Churchman, is contemptible even to those who have no religion themselves; and to all mankind (the actors only excepted) hypocrisy is odious.

The second thing we shall take notice of is the catechising and instructing of youth in the principles of Christianity; and would to God this were as seriously considered by parents as I assure myself it is by you; we should then see another face of things, and neither the service of God, nor our ministry in his Church, would be slighted as they are. But whilst people think there is so little use of them, take more care of the bodies than the souls of their children, labouring for an outside appearance, solicitous to prevent or reform every aukward motion or gesture, and to bring the child to a graceful deportment, and in the mean time neglect the moral culture of his mind, leaving that to be defaced and distorted by disorderly affections and headstrong passions; what

wonder is it if the children continue in the same course, so agreeable to their ease, their worldly interest, and their inclinations! It is not to be imagined they can ever fall into right notions without instruction: youth is not easily prevailed upon to think seriously, and is still more unlikely to judge right; it does not discern or feel the defects or graces of the mind as it does those of the body; and has little inclination to call for help, or be persuaded it stands in need of it. Parents therefore, and guardians who have the custody of children, should bring it home to them; and use all the proper means to make those early impressions, which are to influence and govern their future actions. If these for the most part are received with reluctancy, they should be inculcated with the greater care: nor is their aversion to be wondered at; for we bid them to curb their appetites, and let reason govern; to regard things that are out of sight, before such as they see and feel; and to prefer future hope before present fruition. These precepts are not soon understood, or lightly digested, but they must be learned and practised, or the man is lost, and the animal only makes a figure. The Church of Rome sets her disciples but one short lesson, which is in truth to learn nothing at all, but implicitly to receive all that she says,

and obey all that she commands without hesitancy or scruple; to resolve their particular faith into her general one, and not presume to enquire into the ground and reason of infallible dictates. But an authority so usurped as this must needs (as apparently it is) be supported by suitable methods, by unjustifiable and insolent pretensions, by wicked condescension to worldly interests and passions, by false representations and scandalous suggestions, by fraud and deceit, by force and cruelty; in short, by all courses that can be taken, either to make men wink, or put out their eyes; without which she would long ere now have been deserted by such of her children, at least, as have learning, sense, or conscience, in spite of all the pomp and splendour wherein she displays herself. But the very business of the Reformation was to rescue men's minds from this reproachful slavery; and at first it had so good effect, that every body was roused, and began to look about him; every body thought it his duty to believe for himself; i. e. to understand what he believed, and be able to give a reasonable account of it; to read the Scriptures frequently, to search diligently for the true meaning and intention of the blessed Spirit in them, and to work out his own salvation. But by degrees this fervour slackened; as our peace

at home grew to be better established, our apprehensions from abroad lessened; and, as the Psalmist speaks of the Israelites, when we were in trouble we sought God early, but when our deliverance was past, we remembered no longer the multitude of his mercies, and the wonders that he wrought for us. Our fathers laboured under all imaginable discouragements for the discovery of truth; they found it, and thought it cheaply purchased with their blood; they left the inestimable possession to their children, and were not wanting to let them know the true value of it. But heirs are generally careless of an inheritance that comes easy. Christian knowledge daily became less their business, and the subject of their thoughts; and in a course of heedless security, we are arrived at such a negligence in these matters, that idleness, self-conceit, and the scandalous abuse of liberty, have brought too many protestants to a level with the papists, if not below them in point of ignorance. It is a sad reflection, but too visible to be denied or excused. This is the spring from whence that cool indifference towards all opinions flows, and which carries men so unconcernedly from one to another as their interest lies: they really understand none, and are difficultly persuaded to think it

worth their while to enquire after any. One knows not what to offer to people thus loose in their principles, or rather thus in reality without any at all, nor which way to lay hold on them, and bring them to consideration. But it must be done, or the cause of the Reformation throughout all Europe (for the disease is epidemical) will be lost: we have renounced, and God forbid we should ever have recourse to, those politic unjustifiable methods, whereby popery supports its superstitious idolatrous worship, and doctrines contradictory to reason and sense. We profess only to rely upon God's assistance in the use of those Gospel means which he allows; but if we suffer these means to fall into neglect or disuse, if we foolishly fancy ourselves in safety, because the danger is not immediately at our doors; though we see even at this time the villanous treatment and barbarous inhuman cruelty to which our brethren are exposed, wherever the spirit of popery dares to exert itself; if we have no fellow-feeling of their sufferings, nor foresight of those that may befal ourselves, God will not always, as hitherto he has done often, preserve us by miracle: he expects us to cooperate with him; otherwise, in the ordinary course of things, our enemies must have the advantage

of their diligence, and the Almighty arm on which we pretend to repose our confidence will be provoked to withdraw itself.

Let us therefore, my brethren, do all that in us lies to retrieve that almost lost sense of the blessing we enjoy under the light of the Gospel; and to revive that warmth of zeal which glowed in the breasts of our first reformers, conducting them in the search of it through all obstacles, animating them in adhesion to it against all the terrors that the devil and his agents could threaten them with; and without which, God only knows whether we had not to this day sat in darkness. And I think it is no way more likely, and more effectually to be compassed, than by bringing the catechetical instruction into constant use and credit. It has long and in most places been looked upon as the discipline of the inferior sort; occasioned as I suppose from a presumption, that the nobility and gentry were careful to have their children abundantly instructed at home; but since, by woeful experience, we have found how much it is neglected, and that in the opinion of the present age, religious principles are not always reputed necessary ingredients in the composition of a gentleman; let us in the name of God try whether we can awaken them

to a better sense: let us apply ourselves to all orders of men; let us solicit, beseech, and importune them, that they will suffer us to bring them to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they will permit us to set before them the glorious hope of immortality which he has purchased for us, but attainable only through his merits, and by obedience to his commands. Let us represent to them the fatal consequences that have arisen from this neglect, and the yet greater mischiefs that are likely to result from it. Let us use our utmost address to make them sensible, that the obedience, love, and reverence, which they expect from their children, depends in a great measure upon their disposition to know and love God; that not only their happiness hereafter, but even in this world, rests upon it; for nothing is more certain than that peace, and property, and the blessings of a legal administration, cannot long be preserved among men who are under no restraint from principles. In short, let us practise all honest arts, to prevail with people of all conditions to sow the seeds of religion and moral virtue early in their children's minds, and assure them of our best endeavours afterwards to cultivate their growth, to improve the soil, and bring them to maturity, that they may see the fruits with joy. For

I have confidence in you, my brethren, that when you have them before you, it will be your business and labour to inform their understandings, rather than to exercise their memories, and that you will make it your study to explain every article in such easy and obvious words, as are fitted to their capacities, and most likely to make deep impression and stick long upon their minds. Reformation of manners is not more talked of than it is wanted. It is a very necessary, but withal a very difficult work; for where vicious habits have got possession, it is a more than ordinary measure of God's grace that must cooperate with human endeavours to root them out; and therefore there is little hope of success in this undertaking, till we can seriously be assisted and encouraged to begin at the right end; till instead of speaking to the adult, who sometimes will not hear, and often will not be persuaded, we obtain more tractable tempers to deal with; minds not yet prepossessed with passion or interest, minds not stained with vicious tinctures, but such as we may hope, with God's blessing upon our labours, to prepare and qualify for the entertainment of just ideas and true notions of piety and moral honesty, before evil inclinations grow strong enough to make head against them. Irreligion and vice

will scarce be brought out of vogue, or put out of countenance in the present age; they are grown too sturdy, and too assured. And therefore, we who are called to labour in the vineyard must not fondly flatter ourselves with the expectation of seeing much fruit grow from our culture and pains: that must be looked for in a coming generation of men, in whom virtue and knowledge have been planted early, and grown up proportionably; it is their resolution, and steady adherence to the principles they have learned, must drive them out. But we may safely indulge ourselves in that most comfortable reflection, that our works will follow us: that whilst we are endeavouring to form a tender mind to every thing that is right and good, and may not discover the greatest likelihood of its answering our care, our precepts may fix themselves, and God be working with us, to produce in his good time a chosen instrument for his service, and a bright example to the world. This may fall out when we are gone and forgotten; but he who watered the plant which God has been pleased to bless with so great increase, will be remembered by him to have done the duty of a faithful servant, and be in no danger of losing his reward.

Preaching is the next thing I shall speak to;

which in this last age has been looked upon if not as the greatest and most important business of a clergyman, if it has not been esteemed his most valuable character, has yet where well performed been attended with much praise and distinction. Would to God we had found it so useful in the effects! for we may without vanity say, and our enemies allow it, that the English have carried preaching to a degree of perfection beyond what has been done in any other part of Christendom: but what has it amounted to? What fruits have we seen of our own or our predecessors' pains in this kind? Do not people generally come to sermon more as an entertainment than an instruction? Do they not sit as judges of the preacher's learning and parts, rather than as disciples that come to learn their duty? Preaching, in the true sense and latitude of the word, as it is understood of our whole conversation, tending to the instruction and edification of others, is indeed the most important article of our business, our noblest employment. But then what is uttered from the pulpit is, or ought to be, the least part of it. The catechise from the desk does more good to the children, and to such of their parents as diligently attend it. Pious discourses, and sober reasoning with particular persons, as occasion

offers, and as their cases may require, have yet greater weight: and, above all, the preaching of a good life, the constant instruction of a good example, begets veneration wherever it appears, and affects every heart that is capable of being touched, and is not destitute of God's grace. One very necessary part of preaching is to oppose gainsayers, and (not to mention the learning and judgment requisite to it) we may consider that no small advantage lies in managing the controversy with address, so as to let the opponent see we contend to gain, not to vanquish him. We are beset with contradiction on all sides, and the condition of the Church militant implies that she must not expect to be disengaged from, or in this state to overcome, her adversaries. Whether it pleases God to have it so, for the better exercise of patience, long-suffering, humility, self-denial, and the rest of those peculiar Christian virtues which tend so much to exaltation in another life, or that we may not be too fond of this, in which neither certainty nor quiet can be obtained; whether it be that a state of probation necessarily infers that we should be surrounded with all sorts of temptations and difficulties, or that our ill conduct here does naturally produce those troubles we complain of; whence it should come to pass,

or for what reasons God is pleased that this should be the condition of his Church, is best known to himself. But so it is: and as the Israelites, Abraham's natural children, could never entirely get rid of the Canaanites, but they remained as thorns in their sides; so the children of his faith are subjected to the same fate, and must be content, how grievous soever it may be, to live in the midst of a perverse, and crooked, and froward generation.

The perils among false brethren are not the least in the catalogue of afflictions which St. Paul suffered for the cross of Christ: the wound goes deep, and the anguish is doubled, when it comes from an hand which ought to have strengthened us; and the condition of the Church is very lamentable, when they that eat her bread, lift up their heels against her; I mean, when they who have received their spiritual food, the blessed sacraments, and sincere milk of the word from her bosom, fall afterwards from us to idolatry or schism, disturbing her peace, and distracting her friends. Yet this we must with grief confess too often happens, and they generally prove the most spiteful of her enemies: it behoves us therefore to have a watchful eye upon such as God has committed to our charge; our credit, our

quiet, and our eternal interest require it; that at the great day of account we may be able to say with comfort, "Of those that thou gavest me have I lost none;" and in our conversation with those that differ from us, I am confident you are of opinion with me, that we should use all reasonable, and none but reasonable, methods to maintain our ground against them; that we should exercise an extensive charity towards them, and that we should recommend our doctrine by the influence they may see it to have upon our practice.

And, in the first place, we must be careful to maintain our ground, for the adversaries are restless, watching all opportunities, and taking all advantages; and how shameful will it be, if truth at any time happen to be overborne by reason of our negligence or unskilfulness! Our part therefore is constantly to be intent upon our ministry, and frequent and zealous in performing the several duties of it: to instruct the ignorant with plainness, to rectify the erroneous with temper, to rebuke the obstinate with authority, and to punish the incorrigible with resolution; to be fervent in prayer, devout in administering the blessed sacraments, watchful over our people, studying the complexion of

their minds, and applying to them accordingly; like skilful physicians of the soul, examining frequently how the blood and spirits move, whereby we come to discover the remotest inclination to a distemper, and prevent the malignity of it; and to do all with prudence, remembering how much depends upon it, and how useless the most zealous and well designed labours are oftentimes made by the want of it. In short, our main business must be, to let them see that they can be tempted to look for nothing abroad, that is not to be found with advantage at home; that if we enter into debates with them, it is in order to a friendly conviction, and if we struggle, it is for their safety.

To this end, in the second place, an extensive charity is to be exercised towards them, for this was all along the practice of our Saviour, and the distinguishing mark of his followers. How lowly did he condescend to inform our understandings, how unweariedly did he labour to overcome the perverseness of our natures! Nothing could lessen the ardour of his affection, no injuries could abate or divert his love; and to manifest the sincerity and duration of it, he loved us to the end; and if we will be owned as his disciples, there is no

other way but by following his example, by bearing contradiction with meekness, instructing with gentleness, and expecting the event with patience; and what can be more reasonable? All that are in error deserve our advice, and if we give it sincerely, we shall do it in the manner most likely to have it received and followed. The weak have a just title to our pity, and none but the wilful should fall under our displeasure. To enforce this with reason we need only to observe, that the lineaments of our bodies do not distinguish us more from each other, than the temper of our minds: and as each individual body according to the predominancy of this or that humour in it is more liable to one infirmity than another, and none exempt from all; so mistaken inferences, and false notions, are indispositions of our souls, which we all have found by experience, and we give admission to them, not according to the evidence they bring, for all are wrong, and have really none to offer; but as the weak place in our minds is touched, and stands affected; and where they once prevail to settle, it is no easy matter to root them out. But as this in some instance or other is what every man is subject to, we should learn to bear one with another; and consider that one who has

escaped the contagion of error, though perhaps he does but think so, for him to be angry with or reproach the infected, is just as reasonable as for one who is sound and in perfect health, to be incensed against the sick and infirm. It would become him better to be thankful for the blessing he enjoys above his neighbour, to labour to make him well and easy as himself; and if he has a sore place, to touch it tenderly. Such an hand will be gratefully admitted, when rougher treatment will be shunned with aversion.

But, thirdly, we must above all things strive to recommend our doctrine by the integrity of our lives; for the precepts of the Gospel will extremely want their efficacy where they are not accompanied with the power and spirit of it; our preaching will appear a jest if we live in contradiction to it: and St. Paul's expostulation will crush us with its weight; Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that teachest the danger of leaving the Church's communion, dost thou continue in it, transgressing its rules? Thou that justly reprehendest others for unnecessary, ill-grounded, and trifling scruples, hast thou none in the breach of the clearest points of duty? How hard do these inter-

rogations press upon the guilty! And how must they be confounded, to stand mute without reply! But you, my brethren, have taken care (praised be that grace that enables you) to supersede what I might say further upon this head; yet, if there be any one among us, who is conscious to himself of having either neglected his duty as a minister of Christ, or violated the rules of our common Christianity, I pray God he may take occasion from hence seriously to reflect upon it, heartily to bewail his faults, and to be deeply sensible of the scandal he brings upon the Church, and the danger to which he exposes his own soul.

In the last place, my brethren, let me advise you to beware, that whilst you are treading in St. Paul's steps, becoming all things to all men, if by any means you may gain some, you suffer no deceitful hope to draw you to unwarrantable compliances, or to recede in the least degree from the doctrine and discipline of our Church; that Church wherein you became members of Christ, wherein through his grace you have been admitted ministers and priests, and whose interest you have under the strictest ties obliged yourselves to support. Her establishment is truly Christian and

primitive, her articles of communion are few, and her ceremonies only such as are requisite to decency and order. Her prayers have the true spirit and life of ancient piety; there is a warmth of devotion breathes in them, which is not to be met with in compositions of later date, and the shortness of her collects keeps it from evaporating. I am sensible I have been long already, otherwise I should proceed to the consideration of some other points, particularly that of visiting and entering into some degree of familiarity with your neighbours; whereby you have the opportunity of becoming intimate to their concerns, gain authority and credit to compose differences among them, may be advised with in the education and disposal of their children, and when age and infirmities grow upon them, may be assisting in the settlement of their affairs, and ready to give them ghostly help and comfort before the last hour comes, when darkness begins to overspread their faculties, and when you are commonly called to administer it, often, if not always, to very little purpose. I forbear to say more, and desire you to join with me in prayer to Almighty God, that he will preserve this truly Christian Church from the open assaults and secret practices

of all her enemies, and grant us the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may all be, and to our lives' end continue to be, worthy members and useful ministers thereof. Amen.

CHARGE

DELIVERED AT

THE FOURTH TRIENNIAL VISITATION

IN 1728.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

SINCE God has blessed me with health and strength, so far as to enable me to give you this meeting, I would gladly perform my part in such a manner as might some way answer the design of our Church in the institution of it. The usual subject of discourse upon such occasions is a beaten road, which in compliance with custom I have hitherto not declined. I was not sparing, when we last assembled, to speak my thoughts, how I wished all my brethren to be qualified for their respective functions, how I conceived they might exercise themselves in them, to the greatest benefit of their people, and their own reputation: I observed how acceptable it would be to Almighty God; how much it would tend to the

honour and interest of our Church; how it would rejoice the hearts, and ease the minds of those to whom the supervision was committed; and how unspeakable a pleasure would result to every one of us, who was conscious to himself of having employed the talents entrusted to him prudently and faithfully, to the instruction and edification of all about him. Nobody needs to be told what an amiable face the moral world would have, if whilst we on our sides employed our best endeavours to make it shine, they on whom our labours are bestowed were docile and tractable, willing to learn, and ready to obey; and if I forbore to hint any thing of that authority which necessarily attends every office in the execution of it, it was because I reflected with inward complacency, that in the main there was no occasion for it. These things may be often repeated, and you will hear them patiently; but as there is something of impertinence in frequent repetitions, so experience convinces us, that it makes them in a great measure fruitless; being spoken of course, they are heard of course, and heeded accordingly. I will therefore at this time, declining all other topics, confine myself to one particular, and that a very common one, but such as can never be too much in our thoughts, or have too much

influence upon our actions. It is indeed the principle of Christian life, running through every part of it, superior even to faith, which St. James says plainly must work by it, or die without it: adding lustre to the brightest virtues, nay, if St. Paul was not mistaken, giving to every one of them their true value, and making the best of them insignificant when not mixing with it. By this you easily perceive I mean Charity; not in the vulgar acceptation of the word, but as our blessed Lord and his apostles understood it in the utmost latitude. It is what we preach, and what we labour to bring ourselves and others into the constant practice of. But so exalted and extensive in its nature, that the lower degrees of perfection in it are seldom, God knows, found in the best, and perhaps the very word not rightly apprehended or understood by those that hear us. It is generally taken to signify beneficence, and the outward acts of it; but to give, is not so much to open our hands, as our hearts; the most valuable of our gifts come from thence, such as our prayers and benedictions, our hopes and our fears, our friendly counsels and wholesome admonitions, and where need requires, and nothing less will serve, fraternal reproofs: these last come very unwillingly from the giver, and are not always well re-

ceived; but for that very reason are to be looked upon as unquestionable proofs of our love, and when prudence guides them, not unlikely to have their proper effect, and raise a solid joy in both their hearts. These instances of Charity reach to the most important wants that our neighbours can have, and are the more beneficial, because they are not always sensible they stand in need of them. Hence we learn how almost infinitely active and warm Charity ought to be, and in what a prodigious variety of cases it finds perpetual exercise. But not to dwell longer on a general description of what may more usefully be considered distinctly in the application of it, I shall make it my subject, and survey it in such a light, as chiefly concerns ourselves and our profession, whereby it will at least be pertinent, and may with God's blessing be of some use.

Charity has every human creature for its object, whom we must sincerely love as such; applying it to their respective wants: nor is it the action, but the intention that recommends what we do. Pride may counsel and instruct, and ill-nature is apt enough to reprove, where neither of them is concerned to see amendment. An alms may be extorted by importunity, or drawn from us by a natural tenderness, in which we relieve ourselves more than the

indigent. But an affectionate regard to their temporal and eternal welfare is what Christianity calls for, and expects we should discover it by all the marks of a sincere good will. Even favours kindly meant, but roughly conferred, are received with reluctancy, lose their grace, and the benefactor almost forfeits the acknowledgment that is due to him. We are sure God estimates our services, not so much for being rightly placed as rightly designed. The deceitful heart of man may have many motives besides charity to actions that in appearance spring only from that root: but God will set them to their true account, and give them no more than their just weight.

But to leave out of our present consideration all those who are too remote to share in any thing but our prayers and good wishes; let us turn our thoughts upon such as at some time, or upon some occasion, may be made sensible that we love them: they may all be reduced to six sorts; the deist, the heretic, the schismatic, the profligate, the careless, and such as are of the household of faith. I cannot conceive that we are likely to meet with any man who will not fall under one of these characters. We have heard indeed of atheists, but since the light of the Gospel entered into the world, such monsters have been seldom

seen in it: and if it is possible there should be any one so desperately lost to common sense, we are pretty sure he will conceal himself, or at least that we are the last who shall hear of him. We cannot say the same of the deist, who very well knows how strange a figure he must make in a Christian country, and might therefore, one would think, avoid to be singular, and affect to look like other men; but he pretends to have such a mighty veneration for truth, as overbears all other considerations; he takes reason unassisted for a sufficient guide, and has so extravagant a conceit of its ability, as to refuse any other superior help. He rejects the prophecies, and revelations that have been delivered down in the Church, either as forged and interpolated, or as obscure and unintelligible, and by no means bearing the construction which Christ and his apostles have put upon them. This you will say is not setting upon our outworks by some trifling objections to our faith or discipline, nor undermining even the foundation of our Church closely and secretly, but playing their most pernicious engines against it openly and in the face of the sun, bidding defiance to Christ and his doctrine, and taking from us at once all the inestimable benefits which we hope to derive from his sufferings and crucifixion. This

is outrageous treatment from an handful of men, (for God be thanked, they are not so numerous as they would have us believe,) and might have been restrained by common modesty; but their assurance is gotten far beyond those bounds: their heads and their hands have been very busy in doing despite to the Christian name, and one could not observe it without indignation, and grief of heart, if we were not assured in the goodness of our cause, and the remarkable providence of God that has been over it in all ages, raising up persons of courage to assert, and of abilities to maintain, it against the cruelty of bigotted individuals, and the sophistry of philosophers; and we may satisfy ourselves that we have such at this time, of whom we may affirm (absit invidia) that since the apostles none have distinguished themselves with greater learning, or better sense. I need not to name books to you, which came lately from the press, and I hope are in your hands; but I am sure it becomes us to do honour to the authors; their labours have been extremely well employed, and are truly worthy of it. You might expect me to say something of the thanks we owe them; but I reserve those for the gentlemen to whom in good earnest I think them due; who have provoked, and almost forced them to write. We are obliged to them,

since they have heterodox notions in their hearts, that they will let us have them in their utmost strength. In God's name let them speak out, and be as plain as they please; for though authority be on our side, we have no disposition to use it; we desire not to work upon their fear, but their reason; we apprehend more mischief from private insinuations, than public discourses. Truth is what they pretend to seek, and it is our duty to join with them in the search; it is worth the travail of a generous mind, and will prevail to the conversion or confusion of its opposers.

An heretic is one who lists himself under the banner of the cross, but in point of belief denies one or more of those articles that Christ and his apostles have proposed to us as necessary to salvation, or adds to them, or by unwarrantable explications invalidates their energy. It would be an endless task to enquire after the various motives to infidelity, but we know it is numbered among the works of the flesh, and wherever we can go to the root of it, we shall not fail to find it spring from carnal considerations. Were a man sincerely disposed to do as the Gospel commands, he would have little temptation to disbelieve what it reveals. For what are we there taught concerning the nature of God and his

attributes, that does not exalt our understandings, increase our adoration, and enforce our duty? What do we find there concerning the incarnation, life, and sufferings of his only-begotten Son, but amazing proofs of infinite mercy and condescension, which our depraved and fallen nature was absolutely in need of? And who can reflect upon the operations of the blessed Spirit, and not rejoice unfeignedly that God has sent him to warm our hearts with divine love, to stir us up to useful meditations, and strengthen us in bringing every good thought to maturity, till it discovers itself in words and works? Among the multitude of causes to which heresies of one sort or other may be assigned, Irenæus, St. Jerome, St. Austin, and such others of the fathers as had the greatest struggles with them, have pitched upon two as the chief, and they are so prolific, that we need not look for more; pride, and sensuality. The first we know made heretics in heaven, and both of them joined to raise up the earliest, and the vilest in the Church of Christ; those abominable Gnostics, who set themselves to corrupt every thing that was good in theory and practice, and wrought so effectually, as to leave a tincture of their pernicious principles more or less discovering itself in every age. Their names indeed are mentioned with de-

testation, but some of their notions plausibly dressed up, and separated from the immoralities tacked to them, formerly have been, and I doubt still are, too favourably entertained.

Baronius roundly affirms, and passes it upon us for the judgment of St. Cyprian, that there is but one single cause of heresy, which is denying the pope's supremacy. His assertion has so much assurance and falsehood in it, that I think you ought to hear his words, which are, Cyprianus sæpe, et firmiter contestatur, non aliunde obortas esse hæreses et nata schismata, quam inde quod sacerdoti Dei non obtemperatur, nec unus in Ecclesia ad tempus sacerdos, et ad tempus Judex vice Christi cogitatur; quem esse Petri successorem, Romanum Pontificem, pro constanti, et absque aliqua controversia sæpius asseverat. Would one think after this, that St. Cyprian said not a word that served his purpose? yet nothing is more certain. The cardinal quotes three of his epistles, which whoever consults will find, that the venerable father speaks of himself and of every other bishop in the catholic Church, affirming that heresies and schisms would in great measure be prevented, if in that place where they first sprang up, due deference were paid to the testimony and authority of the Bishop with his Presbyters. There is nothing

that looks towards the Bishop of Rome, more than to any other of the order; and considering how frequently St. Cyprian had misunderstandings with the Pontiff, and was often upon very ill terms with him, we may rather think he designed to humble the haughty pretensions of the Pope, by setting him upon a level with the rest of his brethren. I should hardly have troubled you with this passage, but that I consider we must in our own defence read the popish writers; and they affirm whatever they please so positively, and upon so weak grounds, that a man of candour is in danger of being overborne by their confidence.

A schismatic is one, who, having no just exception to the rule of faith and good life in the established Church where he lives, separates from its communion, upon dislike of something in its discipline, or form of worship. The name of schismatic is on all sides disowned, and they who estrange themselves most from us, take it most heinously when we apply it to them. But they must pardon us if we cannot forbear the use of a word, because they dislike it; for if by a schismatic we all understand one who unnecessarily separates himself from that body of Christians among whom he resides, then he who does the thing must not take it ill that we give him the name.

If Christians are really a visible society, there must be rules and orders to hold them together; for without these the notion of a society is lost: and we may as well call a loose number of people, who have no relations, dependencies, or engagements among themselves, a commonwealth, or kingdom, as say that Christians are a Church in such a state: for the word Church is a political term, and denotes the collected body of such as own themselves to be Christ's followers; but to what purpose are they brought together, if every one may walk in his own way? This absurdity is so apparent, that we do not read of in the history of former times, nor have we seen in our own, any separate assemblies, that have not immediately set up a government among themselves, and held their members to it with more rigour, than was ever practised in the Church from which they have departed. This therefore is denied by nobody, that in a society, some must rule, and others obey, in order to which known laws must be established, and they who without sufficient cause refuse obedience, are justly charged with making a breach in the body, which when done in the body of Christ, i. e. his Church, is what we call schism. Here then lies the controversy betwixt the Established Church, and other separate assemblies. It is

not only asserted by us, but granted on their side, that a corporation must be visible, and that in the nature of it subordination and distinction are implied; some settled laws must regulate their actions, and that a man rejecting the government under them, dismembers himself from the society. But where (say they who dissent from us) is the power of rule and legislature placed? To which we answer, that we must seek for that in the annals of the Church: it has now subsisted almost 1700 years, and the banner of the cross has never been without its known order and discipline. If we look up to its beginning, we shall find, that the apostles took upon them to settle it under a particular economy, and that not of their own heads, but by direction of their Master; who, when he conversed with them forty days after his resurrection, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, did, we may reasonably conclude, furnish them with particular instructions on what foot to settle and establish his kingdom here on earth. For as to his doctrine, it was the business of his life to teach them that; but as his Church took not place till after his resurrection, the proper time was then to appoint its form and government. Accordingly we find it was actually done in all parts of the world as the Gospel

spread itself. What this was, is best known by the characters of it, and the succession it has had ever since. And it is our business, my brethren, to study this point well, and to insist upon it; nor shall we repent our pains. The evidence is so clear from the apostolical Epistles, as they are explained and illustrated by subsequent practice and history, as will keep our establishment unshaken. We there learn, that three orders of ministers in the Church were always looked upon as necessary to its constitution; of which the ancient heretics and schismatics themselves were so sensible, that they still were careful to preserve them. It was this that set up altar against altar, and made Novatus think it absolutely necessary to have them; when he refused to communicate with those unfortunate weak brethren, who had sacrificed to idols under the persecution of Decius, and whom upon their penitential submission the Church's indulgence had again received. He decoyed three silly obscure Italian Bishops (so Nicephorus Callistus calls them) into his assembly, upon pretence of using their mediation, whom his followers compelled to lay their hands on him, and then, and not till then, he thought he might call his congregation a Church. To set aside the first order, by placing the powers of it virtually in

the second, is a novel device, so unknown to antiquity, as not to be heard of 1400 years after Christ, supported only by the promiscuous use of names in the Epistles, which we are sure had their proper significations and distinct administrations before the second century: and thus much may suffice to have been said concerning schism.

A profligate man needs not be described; his actions are visible; he has no disposition to conceal them, and they sufficiently tell us what he is. He makes himself the daily object of our sorrow, and sometimes provokes our spleen, but must never cease to be the object of our love. He is a brother miserably seduced, scarce worthy of the name, and in appearance sold under sin; but we may not forget who died for him, and, if it is possible to rescue, must not lose him. His redemption is not to be despaired of, for the violence of his passions may abate, the follies he pursues may tire him; experience will convince him, that they fall infinitely short in answering the ideas he had conceived of them; they vex him by disappointment, and some of them perhaps punish and torment him. What he feels we hope he will consider; and when his understanding is awakened, if any of us may prove the happy instrument of introducing the grace of God,

what unspeakable joy will he feel in saving a soul alive, and in reflecting on the reward promised to it!

The careless man is one whom we know better than we can define, and is of all others most difficultly to be laid hold on. You may (if they will give you leave) dispute with the deist, the heretic, the schismatic, and in a fair and free debate hope to do them service. If you can open the wicked man's ears, you have enough to say that will reach his heart, and work either shame or reformation there; for truth in a full light may in fact be resisted, but in theory never can; where it fastens it keeps its hold, pinches and galls when struggled with, and will by no means be shaken off. Can a man of common sense choose but labour to be at ease with such a companion, that perpetually reproaches, reviles, and threatens, and whom no reply or excuse will silence? It cannot be unless he resolves to be reprobate, and then with grief we leave him to a dreadful expectation. But the careless man, being destitute of attention, shuts up all the avenues to his soul; he will not give himself leisure to hear, or see, or understand; but keeps his mind in a thoughtless inactivity, and never suffers it to take wing in contemplation. Sometimes perhaps it may flutter; but, unused to the

motion, drops immediately, and sinks into a stupid acquiescence. Such a mind is in a lethargic state: reproofs, and sharper discipline, like caustics and incisions, may make the patient shrink, but the sense is quickly over; he slumbers on again, uneasy in appearance, but not knowing what ails him. This disease of all others gives least hope of success to the physician, either of soul or body; but such, my brethren, as belong to us (dangerously and almost desperately sick as they are) require our peculiar attendance, and we must administer to them as Providence shall give us an opportunity, without ceasing, under any discouragement, to labour their recovery.

Thus I have described five sorts of persons, who are the objects of our love and charity; and if we proceed to consider how we may make it most effectual to them, let us reflect how St. Paul treated the Athenians. His spirit was provoked at the sight of their idols, and he offered unanswerable reasons to bring them to the knowledge of Him, whom they ignorantly worshipped; he laboured their conviction warmly, but decently, like one who was much in earnest, but not in passion; he did not set himself against their altars and images in a boisterous manner, but, undermining them by the strength of his arguments, left their wor-

shippers to despise and overturn them as God should please to enlighten their understandings and stir up their zeal. This was his method, and shewed that he derived it from above, being the result of that wisdom which is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; and every one who succeeds him in the Gospel ministry, may be assured that God will bless him in the use of it.

When a man has confidence in the justice of our intentions and the sincerity of our good will, it is inconceivable how readily he is brought into our sentiments: our way lies open to his heart, when our good meaning has insinuated itself, and predisposed it to entertain us. Doubts and scruples are not over-reluctant, where it is evident that information is obligingly offered, and truth quietly and amicably sought after. The conquered in such an encounter yields joyfully, and blesses the hand that took the cataracts from his eyes: nor need any one to fear that an intimacy with heterodox persons may bring him under censure; his known character will go a great way in guarding him against the suspicions of men; and the good end he has in view, with the weighty importance of it, will not only justify, but highly honour him in the sight of God. To bring back one that has strayed, is a work

of such value as to cause joy in heaven; but to fetch home a renegade, one who had forsaken and disowned his Master, to reclaim and reinstate him in his former obedience, is of superior difficulty, and has something heroical in the performance; it bears a faint resemblance to that memorable action related by Eusebius of St. John, who, hearing that a young man, seduced from his discipline, was become captain of a band of robbers, went to the place of their rendezvous, challenged his disciple, and, laying hold on, dragged him away.

The several persons whom we have been speaking of, are none of them fond of the names we give them; how therefore may we order the matter, so as without offence to attack them in the right place? No doubt it must be with a calm and beneficent temper, such as may demonstrate that we love them, and are affectionately concerned for their temporal as well as their eternal interests. We must yield to the deist, the heretic, and the schismatic, what every man claims as a common right, to be believed sincere in what he affirms concerning his own judgment and sense of things. We must allow veracity to them, or grant they have equal cause to distrust us; and till suspicion is removed on both sides, argument will make a very slow progress.

But when a man is satisfied, he speaks to a friend, he declares his own mind freely, hears patiently, and is in the best disposition to agreement. Love added to reason, is like oil to a rough or sharp medicine, helps down smoothly and easily, what without it would stick, or perhaps be thrown up again. Hard words and passionate exclamations make a man start back; he presently apprehends an enemy to be upon him, and prepares himself to fence and guard even against truth from that quarter. What then must we think of cruelty, force, and compulsion? but that they are contrary to reason: used for want of it to support a tyranny over body and soul, and unknown to the Gospel, which requires and only accepts voluntary obedience, and demands no other than a reasonable service.

I have been drawn in the course of my thoughts to a greater length than I intended; but I must not however omit to say a word or two of the love we should bear to the household of faith, to those who are joined with us in sentiment and communion. To this society it is requisite our affection should be more intense than that wherewith we look upon other men. We love and wish well, and are ready to do good to, every one that bears the face of a man. But they who have the image of

Christ impressed on them must needs appear most amiable in our eyes, and the bonds that knit us together, in conjunction with Christ our Head, make our interests inseparable. St. Paul, in the Epistle to his converts at Rome, commands them to be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love; so we read it. And the least it imports is, that Christian brethren should be altogether as friendly and affectionate to each other, as they are naturally disposed to be who descend from the same parents; but we know the Greek to be much more emphatical. Τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι: Carry yourselves towards each other in brotherly love, with such a peculiar tenderness as parents bear to their offspring, nay, as is observable in the whole animal race, for every creature endeavours to preserve its young, at the peril of its own safety. This, my brethren, is the love that ought to be amongst us; this is the badge and character whereby our blessed Lord would have us distinguished; hereby shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. He would have that divine quality so plentifully diffused in their hearts, as to extend to all men, for so did his; but he expected it to be remarkable among his followers, thereby to demonstrate who had

been their teacher. I need not be more tedious in particularizing how our love should be exercised, for every body knows what he expects from a friend, and what is due to him; and he that fails in the practice, has a monitor within that will certainly reproach and severely condemn him.

Let us therefore, in the words of our Liturgy, beseech Almighty God, "who has taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, to send the Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Him; and to grant this for his only Son Jesus Christ his sake."

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT WORCESTER,

In June, 1688.

ON CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

John xviii. 36.

JESUS ANSWERED, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

IN all the history of that barbarous usage which our blessed Lord met with from the hands of the Jews, nothing perhaps is more remarkable, or more lively expresses the inveteracy of their malice, than that article of his accusation before Pontius Pilate, that he called himself a king. The charge in fact was very true, and therefore they were certain he would not deny it; and treason against Tiberius was so tender a point, as they easily foresaw would preclude all hope or expectation of Pilate's mercy. That governor knew very well how

spitefully they prosecuted an innocent man, with noise and clamour, unreasonable suggestions, and false evidence, and therefore made several attempts to rescue him out of their hands, and set him at liberty. But when with a pharisaical vehemence and pretence of loyalty it was urged home, Whosoever calleth himself a king speaketh against Cæsar; and, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; he had no more to say, but laid his hand upon his mouth. He seems to have been a good-natured man, and to have had an inclination to justice in the administration of his office; and Josephus gives us an extraordinary instance of it. For when he had privately brought and set up some images of the emperor in Jerusalem, and the Jews in a tumultuous manner demanded to have them removed, and would not otherwise be appeased, though he had them all entirely at his mercy, encompassed with his troops, yet he chose to gratify them, and hazard the displeasure of his Master, rather than to proceed to extremities. But he durst not use this tenderness when Jesus was accused to claim the style of king, without deriving it from Rome; his most predominant affection was to his own interest; it easily overcame his other laudable but weak dispositions, and without further delay he proceeds to con-

demnation. Had these Jews been such excellent subjects as they pretended, and so much concerned for the right and honour of the Roman emperor, there might be some ground for a charitable imagination, that a mighty zeal for his service was the thing that made them prosecute the charge against our Lord with so much rigour; but this is so far from being the case, that in that vast circuit of the Roman empire there were not such turbulent spirits as in Judea, so restive under the yoke, and so ready upon every light pretence to throw it off. And of this, without having recourse to profane histories, which afford us a multitude of flagrant proofs, this piece of sacred history, which is now under our consideration, is big with an undeniable demonstration; for here we are informed, that at the very same time that they were so fierce against Jesus, and would have their loyalty to Cæsar looked upon as the cause, they were petitioners for the life of an infamous rebel, who for sedition and murder was cast into prison. They had all along expected in the person of their Messiah a mighty, puissant, and victorious prince, and at this time all their prophecies concerning him were arrived at their completion. Daniel's weeks were quite expired, and the sceptre of Judah was in a stranger's

hand : this made them look for his coming with so much impatience, that they were ready to entertain every impostor who had but the impudence to set up for himself. Even Herod, a treacherous, cruel, and vicious prince, did not want those, who, betwixt court flattery and human credulity, worked themselves up into a belief of his being the Messiah, and are by St. Matthew for that reason styled the Herodians. How readily did the people at first entertain our blessed Lord : how eager and impetuous were their endeavours to exalt his throne ! He was fain to withdraw and conceal himself from them, foreseeing their design of taking him by force to make him a king. But how quickly did their zeal cool, and that mighty tide of affection turn, so soon as he undeceived them in their expectations, and told them plainly, that his kingdom was not of this world ! This was the true cause of their spleen against him. They could not bear, after so long an expectation of an earthly empire and external grandeur, to be thus balked in their hopes, and suffer all to sink in a spiritual explication. If this doctrine once took place, they must bid adieu to that imaginary pomp and power of the Messiah's reign, with which they had so long supported their drooping spirits, and fed their

governing passions of malice and revenge. If this be the result of his princely power, and his claim of dominion conclude in this, no wonder they cry out in the words of his own parable, "We will not have this man to reign over us." For they expected a monarch that should subdue all their enemies, and make Jerusalem the mistress of the world. For thus their prophet Isaiah had foretold, or at least they were resolved thus to understand him; and there was not so high a figure, so shining a metaphor, in any of the prophecies, which they did not flatter themselves was to be fulfilled in a literal sense. But God himself, who is best able to interpret the dictates of his own Spirit, tells us, that the empire he came to erect is over our souls; that the extent of his dominion is universal, takes in every individual of the whole rational nature; that the enemies he subdues are death and the grave; and the glorious reward of their loyalty, who serve him with sincerity and affection, are life and immortality: as for riches and power, pomp and splendour, whatever is the object of an ambitious spirit, and dazzles the eye of a vulgar understanding, he utterly disclaims them; "My kingdom is not of this world."

That we may reflect upon these words with greater benefit to ourselves, I shall endeavour

to shew, first, what is meant by the kingdom of Christ, or kingdom of heaven, and how many several acceptations of the word we meet with in Scripture. Secondly, by what methods it is erected, enlarged, and established. Thirdly, upon what principles it subsists: and by comparing these with those rules by which civil power is commonly obtained and supported in the world, we shall easily discover the truth of our blessed Lord's assertion, and be convinced that his kingdom is to be sought for elsewhere, and by other means.

And first, by Christ's kingdom is very often understood in the Scripture the power of the Gospel, that influence which his doctrine has upon our lives to subdue our passions, mortify our inordinate appetites, make us sit loose to the world and its concerns, fix our thoughts and desires upon nobler objects, and every way reduce our lives to a conformity with his precepts. Thus in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel and the thirty-third verse, our Saviour commands his disciples, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;" i. e. make it your chief business to be rightly instructed in my doctrine, and let your lives be suitable to your profession, and then you need not be solicitous after worldly mat-

ters. Providence will supply you with such things as are convenient, or at least necessary to a present subsistence. So in the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the seventeenth verse, St. Paul tells them, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" i. e. the Christian religion, the doctrine that he preached, consisted not in ceremony, or a superstitious distinction in the use of meats, but in a pious, sincere, and upright conversation, attended with those blessed effects of inward peace, and the testimony of a good conscience. This is what we understand by the kingdom of God within us, when the devil, the world, and our beloved lusts are excluded, and he rules alone, and without a rival in our hearts.

But, secondly, by the kingdom of Christ is very frequently meant in Scripture, the Church here on earth, i. e. a religious society, professing the worship of God according to those rules which he has revealed to us by his Son. So in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, at the twentieth verse, our Lord tells his disciples, that "except their righteousness did exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Those great doctors might boast as they pleased of their religious

performances and punctual observance of all the rites in the Jewish Church; yet unless our Saviour's disciples exceeded them in the principles and true practice of morality, they were not qualified to be members of his. So in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, at the third verse, we are told, that Christ shewed himself alive to his disciples after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; by which last words all writers, both ancient and modern, understand that he then gave them rules for the future government and economy of his Church. And the foundation of this was laid in his blood, as the whole fabric was afterwards cemented by that of his apostles, saints, and martyrs in succeeding ages.

This kingdom may properly be said to have been erected by the apostles, because it was not to commence till our Saviour's death; for the Church of the Jews, whereof they were all professed members, was then in being and full force. But the date of that expired with his breath; and before his ascension, he gave them an ample commission to invade the territories of darkness, to practise open hostility upon the Prince of this world, to conquer and subdue all that resisted, to erect his banner, the cross, in all

places where they came, and require under the strictest ties of allegiance that men should fight under it against all his enemies with the utmost courage, and to the last moment of their lives. And in this kingdom of Christ there may be a great many ill subjects; for the Church, as all other visible societies, is held together by rules, and laws, and mutual engagements; and whilst people outwardly concur in them, they must be reputed members of the society, whatever their inward sentiments may be. For indeed the bare outward compliance is all that can possibly fall under our notice; we are not able to make a scrutiny into a man's breast and judgment, and therefore we must esteem of him as he appears, though perhaps he may be a rebel in his heart. It is the listing ourselves in Christ's service, and promising obedience to his commands, that entitles us to the glorious name of his soldiers; but it cannot be wondered at, if all men in their future conduct do not approve themselves equally worthy of the character. Some grow remiss, supine, and negligent, never exercising their arms, faith and the moral virtues, whereby they become inexperienced in the Christian warfare, and the enemy every day gets ground and advantage. Some are wholly indifferent to the cause; go in the herd of his followers,

because birth and education have placed them there, and their obedience is determined purely by accident, and never becomes the choice of their wills. But the basest are those, who, under a guise of loyalty, betray their Master: sordid hypocrites, that pretend to serve God, whilst they are actually employed in the drudgery of their views; and openly profess a zeal for him, yet hold a secret and constant correspondence with his enemies. These, and all others, who profess Christianity without a suitable conformity of their inward sentiments, are indeed members of the Church, and will indifferently partake in those blessings of peace, plenty, or whatever else God shall bestow upon it here; but they must never expect a share in the glories of a future state; those unspeakable joys, which he has purchased with his blood, he will confer upon none but friends and favourites, such as heartily espouse his cause, and are proof against all temptations to the contrary.

There is a third sense in which the kingdom of Christ, or kingdom of heaven, is understood to express that blessed place, which in a peculiar manner, and by way of eminence, is called the abode and residence of God; where they that enter shall be divested of all infirmity, and where perfection reigns; where none can

come but the faithful and sincere, and where the blessed Jesus sits at the right hand of his Father, making continual intercession for our admittance to him.

There is yet a fourth notion of the kingdom of Christ, which found great entertainment amongst the ancient Christians, and has sometimes been indulged by learned men of later ages; which is, that Christ shall reign (with the patriarchs, apostles, martyrs, and other holy men, who have died in this faith) a thousand years upon earth; that the Jews and all other infidels shall be converted to the truth; that during this time there shall be an eminent distribution of justice, and all men shall live according to the rules of piety and virtue. This opinion was first occasioned by those expressions in the prophets concerning the reign of Christ, wherein it is set forth with so great a shew of power, pomp, and grandeur, that the primitive Christians knew not how to accommodate them to his spiritual kingdom: and because the promises were so particularly made to the Jews, they imagined that the chief seat of this empire should be at Jerusalem, and that people once more in a state of temporal happiness, superior to what the best of their ancestors ever enjoyed. But they who have taken up this fancy are not agreed among them-

selves, either as to the manner of Christ's coming, or the time: for some will have him actually to descend from heaven in person, and visibly govern the world: others will have his appearance to be only visionary, such as that to St. Stephen was; so that however he may reveal or shew himself to the world, he shall still retain his place at the right hand of God: and others again will have his government to be only virtual, i. e. they suppose that the principles of Christianity will by the power of his Holy Spirit be so strongly impressed upon men's minds, that princes shall govern, and people shall submit from an inward sense of duty, and that affairs of the world shall be so managed, as if himself were present and at the helm: that all vice shall be discouraged, and wicked men punished by a discriminating Providence, which is not now discernible. Then as to the time, some say it shall be a thousand years before the destruction of this world: but others are more inclinable to think it shall succeed it, supposing those words of St. Peter have relation to this matter, where he says, "There shall be after the general conflagration new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

But not to insist longer upon this conceit of the ancients, the kingdom of Christ being suf-

ficiently explained in the other three notions of it, I come now to my second particular, to shew by what methods it is established and preserved. The Gospel we know was first propagated by the preaching of the apostles, and, that their doctrine might find a more easy reception, they endeavoured to recommend it by the purity of their lives. They wrought miracles, to demonstrate the authority of their commission; and these also were so contrived, as to oblige the people, at the same time that they convinced them, to give eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, health to the weak, and food to the hungry; in every thing they expressed a general good will, and made it appear in all their actions that they did not carry on a particular or private interest. If any suspected them of intrigue or worldly design, they were ready to declare against all encroachment upon the secular power, or invasion of property. Nay, on the other hand, the rules of Christianity are of that nature, that whoever consults the honour of his prince, the service of his country, the benefit of his neighbour, and his own reputation, wants only faith to be an excellent Christian. And because the service of God is a reasonable service, and must proceed from an inward conviction of the mind, there-

fore they used only such means in the making of converts as did properly conduce to that end, persuasion, argument, and insinuation. To the Jews they urged the testimony of Moses and the prophets, evidence they could not reject, those writings being (as themselves also believed) records of divine authority. To the Greeks they offered arguments, drawn from reason and philosophy, to prove the being and nature of God, as also to expose the absurdity of their idolatrous worship, and multiplicity of gods. Their vicious lives were reproved from their own moral writers, their false notions rectified in their own way of reasoning, and, in short, no rational course was unattempted to bring men over to the knowledge of the truth: they became all things to all men, if by any means they might gain some. And the truth is, had they acted otherwise, there would have been great reason to suspect their pretence to a divine revelation and conduct; for they had shewn themselves destitute even of that common prudence, which all wise men discover in the management of their affairs. Every man who has a business in hand, considers by what ways he may most easily accomplish it, and if he be not forsaken of his reason, he will use only such as have a natural

tendency to that end: and upon this account it is that we never find the Apostles attempting to make converts by force or cruelty, which they might have done, had God so pleased, more effectually than any that ever undertook the cause of Christianity; for the Almighty arm was on their side, and they made it appear in proper cases that they were able to inflict diseases, and death itself, by an invisible power. But they were wiser philosophers and better men than to make use of this power, where it could not bring to pass the end they aimed at: they not only foresaw how much this would have prejudiced their cause in the esteem of sober and considering men, who do not love to have their freedom abridged, or even to be obliged after a controlling way; but they knew very well it was a medium that in its own nature was incapable of doing them service: for it is in no man's power to be convinced because another is pleased he should, much less can conviction be beaten into him. Reason is capable of admitting truth only in proportion to the evidence it brings along with it; when the understanding is convinced, the will cannot withhold its assent; but, on the other side, no force or art can make a man believe, nay, he has it not in his own power to believe that, whereof he has no conviction. For if the sun

appears to me in our meridian, and I am put upon the rack to say it is midnight, the extremity of torture may induce me to say any thing, but it is impossible I can think of things otherwise than as they appear. And therefore how many soever may be driven into a church by these methods, it does not at all enlarge it in God's account, who computes the number of his servants by their true faith, not outward profession; and accepts willingness and sincerity, not hypocrisy or constraint. And indeed how much soever people may pretend to serve the common cause of Christianity by these means, they know very well it is no such thing; for Christianity aims at nothing but the happiness of those to whom we apply ourselves, and no man ever yet could be made so in spite of his teeth. The Apostles were so far from this practice, that they condescended in all respects, as far as conscience would give them leave; they complied with the weakness and infirmity of their converts, where they were obstinately rejected; in the spirit of meekness they prayed for success; and where they met with ill usage and persecution, they returned a blessing. And St. Paul gives us the reason of this procedure; "for," says he, "we seek not yours, but you:" we desire not your goods or estates, we have no ambition to serve in boast-

ing the number of our followers, we have no inclination to erect a spiritual dominion to ourselves and tyrannize over your consciences; we seek only to gain your fellowship and friendship; we seek only to persuade and guide you into that path, which alone can lead to eternal happiness. It is your happiness we desire, and we pursue this without any indirect view to our private interest.

By these means the Church of God, i. e. the number of the faithful, first grew and increased: and if we enquire how it has since been preserved, abstracting from the supernatural assistance of God's Spirit, whereby he has promised always to support it, we cannot but be sensible it is by the practice of the same virtues, and profession of the same faith, which she received in her infancy.

The arts of policy and human contrivance are not only unsuccessful here, but dangerous. The use of them argues a distrust of that Providence, whereon we ought to depend, calls that plainness and simplicity in question which an honest profession of the truth implies, and may provoke God to leave us destitute of that assistance, which we seem to undervalue in the partial use of it. It is a maxim in politics, that empire is to be maintained by the same methods by which it is procured. Our Saviour got not

his kingdom by human policies, nor will he support it upon those principles. It thrives by oppression, is improved by hardships, and perfected by sufferings. Affliction and distress, the yoke and the cross, are very firmly and effectually entailed by him upon his Church; and if we consider that the business of Christianity is to mortify us to this world, and make us masters of ourselves, we cannot but adore that Providence which so kindly concurs with us in the business: for suffering the world to treat us ill, is the most likely way to wean us from it; and we cannot long persist in loving that which makes us none but ungrateful returns.

The primitive Christians, who felt this by experience, were nevertheless so sensible of the benefit, that history tells us of some who were impatient under prosperity, and afraid of plenty; looking upon them as arguments of God's displeasure, and praying, by the favour of some temporal suffering, to be assured that they were in the number of his children, with whom the world was always at enmity. These indeed were heroes in Christianity, advanced to a pitch of gallantry above the common standard, and such as we can much more easily admire than imitate. Health, and strength, and riches, and honour, and reputation, are things the generality are so far from being afraid of,

that it is not without sensible regret they suffer diminution or impair in any of them: but would they seriously consider the uncertainty of human affairs, how little of true enjoyment is to be had in the goods or pleasures of this life, what constant disquiets attend the pursuit of them, and how much our expectations are cheated even in the fruition—whoever, I say, has these reflections, cannot be very fond of any thing here, or be so poor-spirited as to think it a judgment when God is pleased to deprive him of them. Had we but faith to believe what the Scripture tells, and what bare reason could discover, though we did not find it there, that in this place we are only strangers and pilgrims, making a troublesome passage to an unknown region, that terminates in eternal misery or happiness, we should be too intent upon the coast to which we steered to be much concerned for ease or convenience in the voyage.

I come now to consider my third proposition, upon what principles the kingdom of Christ subsists. They are, in short, all the precepts of morality heightened and improved to the utmost stretch of perfection, and recommended to us by a complete example. And these are indeed admirably fitted to support his empire over our souls, but by no means accommodated

to their use, who carry on ambitious and great designs. A short survey of some few of them, as they lie dispersed in the sacred writings, will enable us to make a true estimate of the whole; such as these: suppress your passions, stifle all the sparks of malice and revenge; be chaste and temperate, meek and humble, good-natured and compassionate; do good to all men, love one another, nay, love your enemies; pray for those that curse you, be kind to those that despitefully use you; submit to the necessity of affairs with patience, and suffer all providential occurrences with cheerfulness and resignation; be not anxious or solicitous about human events; "settle your affections on things above, and not on things below;" have your conversation in heaven whilst you dwell upon earth; in a word, let the life of Christ be your pattern, and, as far as the frailty of your nature will allow, walk up to that example he has set before your eyes. This is the only language of the Gospel, the dictates of the Son of God to all his followers; these are divine and Godlike rules; and a mind thoroughly seasoned with them, will be as much above the vanities and temptations of this life, as incapable of attaining them by such methods.

And now, if I should present you with a system of political maxims, how vastly

different, nay, how directly opposite are they to these! To enumerate those grosser vices and immoralities, to which an aspiring mind is subjected, and which in a great measure are unavoidable to those who tread in the paths of greatness, such as fraud, dissimulation, detraction, circumvention, and the like, would savour of too much severity in general, as it might of injury and injustice to some particular persons, who have been able perhaps to preserve their integrity, notwithstanding the temptations that surround them, and the provocations they may have met with to the contrary. But there are other inconveniences which none can escape, and which how small soever they may appear in the eyes of such as have this world in view, are yet of so pernicious a consequence to religion, as to be almost, if not altogether, incompatible with it. For example, a diligent and constant application to business, assiduity and close attendance upon the persons by whose means we expect to raise our fortunes, a jealous and suspicious eye upon them whose interest may seem to interfere with our own, a continual care to gain our point, and defeat such as cross our designs, are political virtues; and any person who sets up for what we call the making of his fortune, would esteem it a

reproach to be thought defective in any of them; and yet there is so much of the vicious in the temper of these qualities, and they are so apt to degenerate as they grow habitual, that the longer he continues in these ways, the further he will find himself still to be removed from that which leads to solid content and real happiness.

But to conclude with some application to ourselves. Since Christ's kingdom is not of this world, I am sure it concerns us, if we would be his subjects, to get as loose and as much disengaged from it as is possible. It has many allurements to entangle our affections, and where they once fasten, they hang like weights upon a soul, enervate all attempts to raise and elevate itself, and obstruct its vigour and activity in the performance of all religious exercises. Since we serve a Prince, whose territories are remote, and not easy to be arrived at, we should above all things be careful not to encumber ourselves with such things as will be of no manner of use when we come there; nay, with such things as in spite of all endeavours cannot be transported thither, how much soever some may seem to wish it. Since the customs and manners of that place are so vastly different from what are here in practice, that people too much versed in these become

incapable of ever accommodating themselves to the other, should not our present commerce be sparing, and with caution? What can be more ridiculous, than to labour for trifles that render us despicable, or to study language and fashions that are either unknown or abhorred in the place to which we tend? Had we any other Master than Christ, or did we seek any other than an heavenly country, something might be said in abatement of our folly; but his laws are so well known and divulged, his kingdom with the nature and economy of it have been so plainly described, that in calling him Lord, we declare to the world we renounce every thing for him and his service; the world knows it as well as we do, and when we act counter to such a profession, we are condemned on all hands. But then, if we are sincerely the followers of Christ, let us never be tempted to serve his cause by any other methods than such as he approves; for he perfectly well understands the interests of his own kingdom, and is incapable of being deceived in his measures. Foolish men may have fond conceits, and think they do him honour, when they present him with ceremony and shew; they may contrive to extend the bounds of his dominion by force and compulsion, and

imagine it a proof of their loyalty and zeal to destroy and extirpate all those that will not be brought under their rules. But this is indeed to serve themselves and their own worldly ends, under the pretence of serving him. This is to set up a temporal power upon a spiritual foot, and is the model of a tyranny within his kingdom, upon principles directly opposite to and destructive of it. But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; they are mighty indeed, through God, to "the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." But they are aimed only at the passions and affections of those we combat with. The wounds they make are sometimes severe and deep, but always invisible, and inwardly felt; and, which is the most comfortable encouragement to the fight, the vanquished always submit willingly, and are sensible they are happy in being subdued. These are weapons with which we may attack our friends, and maintain the contest without danger of a breach. There is true love in every stroke, and where it inflicts a smart it is most discerned. Now God of his mercy influence the hearts of all

Christians, to use only these arms in the service of his Son: we are sure his followers increased most, and were most apparently under his discipline, when they did so. The apostles and their successors in the earliest and happiest times of the Church knew no other, and no other have ever since been introduced but to its prejudice.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT THE FIRST LENT AFTER THE REVOLUTION, 1689.

ON GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

EPHES. v. 6.

LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU WITH VAIN WORDS, FOR BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS COMETH THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE.

IN the fourth chapter of this Epistle St. Paul earnestly recommends to the Ephesians those peculiar Christian virtues of humility, meekness, long-suffering, and condescension, by the practice of which he makes the internal union of the Church chiefly to be upheld, and by the help whereof they might arrive in the unity of faith to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. He advises them to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, i. e. to suffer their oppressed reason to revive, and reassume the

power it had so long lost, but was now through the merits of Christ enabled to exercise, of presiding over their unruly wills and passions. He commands them to put off the old man, (their former vicious inclinations and habits,) and to put on the new man, (to enter into a regular course of life, suitable to the precepts and design of the Gospel.) And here he instances in some of the most eminent particulars, that they should always accustom themselves to speak truth; but especially, as the context seems to imply, when the discourse is about matters of religion, they should be extremely careful to inform people aright, and not give them such notions of the Christian doctrine as might make them think it compatible with a Gentile practice; that they should keep their resentments within due bounds; and if at any time they had just provocation to be angry, yet they must not let their displeasure continue, or rise in proportion above the offence; that in their dealings they should be just, and not defraud or purloin from each other; that in their conversation they should avoid such subjects and reflections as might give offence to chaste and pious ears, and choose to talk only of such things as might minister grace and improvement to the hearers; lastly, that passion, malice, and ill-nature, should be banished

from amongst them, and the tenderest affection to each other succeed. He tells them they knew how pernicious the contrary vices were; that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who was an idolater, had any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God; and therefore the text follows as a very seasonable caution, "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

From whence we may conclude, that there were men in the Apostle's time, as there have been since in every age of the Church, who were uneasy under the doctrine of the cross, and never wanting in their utmost endeavours to render the faith of Christ consistent with indulgence to their vicious inclinations. Whence this should come to pass is not so easy to apprehend; for one would imagine, that they who are resolved to live the life of sense only, should very unwillingly admit thoughts of religion, since there never yet was any religion in the world, how absurd soever, that did not at some times and upon some occasions oblige people to lay restraint upon their appetites: nay, I think I may venture to say, there never yet was a religious institution, that did not lay greater hardships upon, and oblige to more

severities, such as desired to be initiated in its mysteries, than the Christian religion requires from its strictest votaries. Yet notwithstanding this, there have been very few libertines but what were willing to profess some religion or other; and perhaps the vilest and most abandoned wretches in the world have been the greatest pretenders to that of Christ. Does this proceed from the power and conviction of truth, which in spite of men's teeth lays hold on the judgment, though it cannot command the will? or do those unspeakable future joys, which our religion offers, make people willing to bid something for a share in them, though they cannot find in their hearts to purchase them at the expence of present pleasure? or does it proceed from the artifices of the devil, who not being able to hinder the sowing of the good seed, does what he can to indispose the soil, and scatters his own tares, that thereby he may destroy, or at least have a share in, the harvest? From which of these causes, or from what others, it may proceed, is not so obvious as the thing itself is manifest; that too many are desirous to reconcile Christ with Belial, and would fain enjoy the present pleasures to which the one invites, without foregoing those glorious hopes which the other exhibits. And therefore we are obliged to consider, against

whom the apostle intends this admonition, and what those vain words were that the Ephesians must take care not to be deceived with: μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις: let no man impose upon you with empty senseless arguments, such as have no strength of reason or authority to support them. For there were two sorts of men at this time, who directed much of their discourses and endeavours to this end; one was the men of a philosophical genius, who though they afforded a willing ear to the Christian doctrine in the gross, yet could not but dispute some particular articles, and struggle with the doctrine of mortification and self-denial. The other was the impure Gnostics, who turned all the mysteries of the eternal generation, the creation of the universe, the incarnation of Christ, the redemption of mankind, and, in short, every thing else that was looked upon as mysterious, into a seemingly sublime, but unintelligible, cant and nonsense; and hereupon built such abominable doctrines, as put the very heathens out of countenance, gave them occasion to traduce our most pure and holy religion, and was one argument used to justify the bitterest persecutions.

Now these being the persons our Apostle had in his eye, his caution, in other words, will be, that he would not have the Ephesians suffer

themselves to be imposed upon by false reason or false doctrine, either the specious arguments of witty men, (for so the libertines of all ages desire to be thought,) or pretended authority of the other; for because of these things, he assures them, the wrath of God came, ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας, upon the children of disobedience. The word ἀπειθεία here used signifies as much as an obstinate stubborn withholding of the assent, an unwillingness to receive conviction; and therefore the children of disobedience are people that will not suffer themselves to be persuaded, or allow reason to work and have its kindly influence upon their minds. For though it be in no man's power to withhold his inward assent from a proposition where the reason of it appears to him, yet he may be partial to an error, may not use sufficient diligence in the discovery of truth, may be averse to reason that crosses his humour, and so, by shunning the light, more easily be imposed upon by false colours. Nay, the practical outward assent may be withheld; a man may not act suitably to his own persuasion, but, as the Apostle expresses it, (Rom. i. 18.) "may hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Having thus explained the words of the text, I shall endeavour to make good those two propositions, whereof the one is implied, the other

positively asserted, in it. First, that those arguments that tend to destroy or weaken the force and obligation of the moral law, are groundless and deceitful; they are vain words, and such as entertain them are cheated by them. Secondly, that wherever there is a general neglect of the duties of morality, it certainly exposes men to the wrath of God; for because of these things (viz. the sinful practices above mentioned) cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

And first, those arguments that tend to destroy or weaken the force and obligation of the moral law are groundless and deceitful: they may all be reduced to three heads. Either such as directly subvert morality, as the doctrine of the Gnostics, and that of fatality; or such as serve to extenuate the guilt of offenders, which are drawn from the consideration of human nature, the mercy of God, the vast disproportion betwixt momentary sins and eternal punishments, and the like; or else such as render our honest endeavours fruitless with regard to our future hopes, as the denial of the soul's immortality, the resurrection of the body, future rewards and punishments, with the extravagant notion of the revolution of souls. All which particulars (with all others that might be thought on) had we time to consider them

distinctly, we should find to fall under St. Paul's censure; but because that would be too tedious, I shall only give a short account of the Gnostics, against whom Epiphanius thinks the fourth and fifth chapters of this Epistle, and particularly my text, were levelled; and then consider the second sort of arguments, such as are used to extenuate the guilt of offenders. For, indeed, those others that either destroy the principles of virtue and honesty, or render the practice of them useless and unfruitful, are entertained but by a few, and they such as will scarce come to hear their errors rectified from hence.

The doctrine of the Gnostics, in short, was this, that the souls of men (not to mention their endless genealogies, as St. Paul calls them, and other whimsies concerning the production of superior beings) were of three distinct kinds, received their variety from different principles, and accordingly each of them had a temper and frame peculiar to itself. The first, the material or carnal, which they say wants a principle of incorruption, and therefore of necessity must perish. The second, the spiritual, having received an adventitious principle of immortality unknown to and beside the design of its Maker, and this therefore cannot perish. The third is of a middle kind betwixt these two,

and to this sort of men only they allow the means of salvation (faith and good works) to be useful, because partaking the nature of both, they may, according as they improve or neglect these means, either advance themselves to the excellency of the one, or sink down into the degeneracy of the other. We may be sure they themselves were of the refined and spiritualized; and because this was not by any exercise either of mind or body, but by the privilege of their natures, therefore they asserted that the most villainous and flagitious actions could not more taint them, than pure gold could be debased by being thrown amongst rubbish; and pursuant to this principle, they despised the precepts of the Gospel as contrived for an inferior rank of men: they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness, and arrived very soon to such an height of brutality, that Irenæus and Epiphanius assure us, Carpocrates made it necessary for those that would attain the utmost perfection of their natures to be learned and studied in vice, and to shew their ingenuity in the discovery of new and unexampled debaucheries. So true was it what St. Paul said of the inhabitants of Sodom, and other wicked Gentiles of old, and what he peculiarly applied to these detestable heretics, that, because when they

knew God, they glorified him not as God, they became vain in their own imaginations, or, as the Greek does rather import, they were frustrated in their reasonings; their unwarrantable search after greater light brought them into more obscurity, so that not only their foolish heart was darkened, and, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; but, which was most dreadful, God gave them over to their own hearts' lusts, to work all uncleanness with greediness. It is long, God be thanked, since this abominable sect infested the Church; and therefore I should scarce have mentioned them, how much soever they are concerned in the text, had not the last age revived too many of their principles and practices, and were there not still a doctrine on foot of too near affinity to theirs, especially in its consequences; which is, that those who once have received the grace of God, can never finally fall from it; a doctrine that gives sufficient encouragement to self-conceited people, who are very apt to discern the marks of grace in themselves, to let themselves loose to such enjoyments as their appetites incline them to; for they have entertained a presumptuous confidence that they cannot finally fall away, but must at last return to their integrity, and the entire favour of God.

I come now to consider those arguments which

people make use of to extenuate, and in some measure to justify, their immoralities, for these indeed have the most general influence upon mankind; and I shall endeavour to give them their full strength, that we may see whether they will bear the stress that is laid upon them.

And first, from the consideration of human nature, they observe, that the frame of our constitutions is from God: that all our natural dispositions and inclinations result (as far as we are able to discover) from the contexture of our bodies, the predominancy of humours, and the different motion of the animal spirits: that these are such as the Author of nature has been pleased to give us, no soul being its own architect; the utmost she can do at present is but to make shift a while with an inconvenient house, in hopes that hereafter it will be rebuilt to the better use and ease of its inhabitant, but she has little or no power to alter the frame; great pretenders to austerity have been baffled in making the experiment, and even St. Paul himself, after all his endeavours, was feign to sit down content with this, that he should indeed be always a sufficient match for his enemy, but must not expect to be wholly rid of him.

Further yet, we have not only vehement

passions, eager desires, and faint resolutions, but there are tempting objects to allure our senses, and make strong impressions upon the imagination. Now to what purpose have we a nature so contrived? why such desires, if they may not be gratified? and why such objects, if they may not be enjoyed? Did God make the one in vain? or did he give us the other purposely to torment us? And yet thus it must be, if that severe doctrine of self-denial take place. We are told indeed, that this world is a place of probation and trial, where we stand candidates for eternal life, a life chiefly, if not wholly, to be employed in the exercise, and perhaps too in the improvement, of the mind; that we are to qualify ourselves here for this life of the soul, by a daily figurative death of the body, by mortifying, as the apostle directs the Colossians, our members that are upon the earth; that without this, heaven would neither be a proper nor very grateful place, for we should carry sensual desires thither, and meet with nothing but intellectual objects. But to this will be replied, that when we put on spiritual bodies, we must needs put off carnal inclinations; for how can there be an appetite, without so much as a capacity of enjoyment? or why should not people relish intellectual pleasures as much

when they are made fit subjects for them, as they did sensual, when their nature was suited to them. We see children delight in sports and in trifles, but as their understandings improve they enter into new scenes of business and of thought, nor have they any longing after those fooleries, upon which but a little before their whole heart was set. Why should it not be thus in the change from this to another life? and if God in his mercy should please to translate a sinner, who has had no antecedent reflections upon his guilt, to a better life; though he must needs be wonderfully surprised to meet with the most refined entertainments of the soul, yet as he had seldom if ever been acquainted with them before, so one would expect his appetite should be the greater. Nor can we imagine it possible for him to lose a thought upon his past follies, unless by a comparison to heighten and endear his present happiness. But, say they, let it be allowed, that a regular and virtuous course of life does as naturally qualify us for heaven, as we are sure it is necessary by divine institution to bring us thither; yet since it is so hard a work, and we carry so many frailties about us, surely God will not be extreme to mark what we have done amiss. He knows whereof we are made, and will remember that we are but dust:

his mercy delights to triumph over his justice; he never seems to punish but with reluctancy; and he, who himself was at so much pains to compass our redemption, when otherwise we were irrecoverably lost, and could not move a step towards our own safety, will not sure frustrate his own work, by rejecting us at last for lesser miscarriages. But, say they, then suppose the mercy and compassion of God should not be so liberally extended to us as we imagine, yet certainly we are secure of justice at his hands, and consequently may promise ourselves that his punishments will bear proportion to our offences; for "shall not the God of all the earth do right?" and as the patriarch with great strength of reason argues, "that God therefore would not destroy the righteous with the wicked," may not we also conclude that he will not lay heavy punishments upon us for small offences, nor make us always miserable because we sometimes offended?

These, in short, are the chief heads of argument wherewith such as sin with premeditation can with any colour of modesty plead their excuse. And supposing them to be true, what is gotten by them? It is no more than a few days of vanity, intermixed with trouble, vexation, and disappointment: for how tiresome and hazardous does the pursuit of their plea-

sures many times prove? and if attained, how much are they cheated in the fruition? But if these arguments are false, what then is the consequence? even the most terrible that can be, eternal exclusion from heaven—from that boundless ocean of overflowing delights, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." And this men quitted for enjoyments so insignificant, that they can frequently sacrifice them to each other, nay, sometimes the whole catalogue to one single darling passion, such as ambition, covetousness, and revenge.

Now when so much is to be lost if an argument prove false, and so little, so very little, to be gotten if it prove true, will not a wise man close with the surest side, and rather tread where there is firm footing, though he may not have altogether so pleasant a prospect or so soft a path, than venture falling from a precipice, or sinking into an abyss?

But not to insist upon this point, we may observe of the forementioned arguments, that some things indeed are truly said, but some are false, and all conclude wrong. For when we reflect upon the constitution of man, and the frailties of human nature, is it reasonable from thence to draw this conclusion, that therefore he may make himself yet more vile? Does not

the force of the argument lie altogether on the other side, that therefore people should help out the weakness of their bodies by the strength of their minds, and be the more unwearied in their endeavours towards perfection, because they find themselves naturally so very short of it? So when we reflect upon the mercy of God, does not reason rather direct us to grateful returns of duty, than to presumption? and if there be so great a disproportion betwixt our sins and the punishments the Gospel denounces against them, is it not greater prudence to forbear those sins, than daringly to commit them because we think there is an argument why they should not be so punished?

But, to come closer to the business, there can really be no excuse drawn from our natural appetites, and the strong tendency they have towards their proper objects, to countenance an immoral action. (By an immoral action, I understand any offence against the law of right reason; or, to speak in words less liable to dispute, and more intelligible to a Christian, any offence against the Gospel precepts.) And to prove this, I only desire it may be allowed and remembered, that man consists of soul and body, that the soul is the superior part, and therefore the reason ought to govern the appetites; and then let us see how the case stands.

Our passions and inclinations, it must be owned, are very strong, and their respective objects are extremely engaging. What follows? Does God positively forbid your approach? Must you only look despairingly at a distance, and neither touch, taste, nor enjoy? If this were so, it would look very hard, and yet even here obedience would be highly reasonable; for he that imposes the difficult task, is abundantly able to give a suitable reward; but this is so far from being the case, that there is not that sort of pleasure in the world, that a reasonable creature would allow himself, to which you may not advance honestly and legally. The mighty hardship God lays upon you, and of which some men complain so much, is, in short, but this; that you would make a legal, that is, a reasonable choice of your pleasures; that you would use reasonable means for their attainment; and when you have them, enjoy them with temperance. And this certainly were fit to be done, though we did not carry one single thought or reflection beyond this life, for the general and particular good of mankind lies in their observance; for temperance is the same to the natural body, as rule and order is to the body politic; small excesses in either shake them, but great and universal infallibly destroy them. The truth

is, the only reason why some people wonder they should not be allowed to give their appetites the loose, proceeds from a narrowness of spirit, a little selfish contracted soul, where all their thoughts terminate in themselves: they think the world was made for them alone, and every thing in it should be subservient to their desires; for else they would consider, that what they think reasonable, is impossible to be done; they would perceive that there are a great many more of the same nature as themselves, of the same passions, dispositions, and appetites; and they would see an absolute necessity of observing some rules and orders in the choice and in the method of attaining their pleasures, if for no other reason but that peace might be kept amongst them, and men might quietly enjoy what perhaps they had not without difficulty obtained. Then, whereas they would invalidate that excellent argument for a virtuous life, that it naturally qualifies us for the joys of heaven, and is absolutely requisite in order to that end; whatever has been said, the argument holds good; for it is a mistake to think that all vices (for of some perhaps it may be true) are put off with the body, like spots in the clothes when we undress, and that all will be clean when the suit is changed: for the most devilish vices are really spiritual, such as pride, malice, revenge,

and, which comprehends them all, ill-nature; and if men do not labour seriously to divest themselves of these in this life, there is no reason to think but they accompany the soul in its separate state—nay, we cannot well think otherwise.

As for the argument drawn from the mercy of God, it is certainly very unreasonable; for what would more incense a good-natured man, than to see another mortally offend him upon that presumption. God's mercies, no doubt, are infinite and inexhaustible, but they are kept in store for the ignorant, the well-meaning, and the penitent. How wonderful and amazingly great was his mercy in our redemption; yet the benefit of this is only to be had upon the terms of a covenant, which, in short, are no less than a true faith and unblameable life, or a hearty repentance of our errors and follies, in which case Christ's merits are accepted to make up our defects.

The last argument of the libertine is drawn from the disproportion betwixt sin, and the punishment of it. But this is false in all its parts; for, first, the ground or assertion that sins are short and temporary, is false; and this error they fall into, for want of distinguishing betwixt the outward act and the obliquity of the will. The first indeed is short and tran-

sient; but then we must likewise acknowledge, that simply considered in itself, and as a natural action, it is no sin. That which makes us guilty before God, is the malice of the intention; and this may be eternal, and always is of equal duration with the punishment: for if people repent, God forgives, and repentance is no more than the reducing our will to its rectitude; but if men will not put away their sins, they must perish—and where lies the injustice of this? For whenever you are content to part with your sins, immediately God puts an end to his punishment; but whilst you resolve to retain your sins, it is just he should continue his displeasure: and if a man will die impenitent, the Church has always thought him incapable of repentance afterwards; and then there is no remedy, but sin and punishment both must remain for ever.

But, secondly, the argument built upon the supposition of the short duration of sin, is false likewise; for it would be no impeachment of God's justice that his punishments were infinite, though the offence were finite, for there is no rule of justice requires that there should be such proportion betwixt the fault and the punishment.

Thus I hope I have in some measure performed what I undertook, having represented

the sinner's plea to as much advantage as I could, and offered some reasons to invalidate it, which I hope do not appear to want their strength. I come now to my second particulars, viz. to shew, that wherever there is a general neglect of the duties of morality, it certainly brings upon that people the judgments of God.

The time will not permit me to say much upon this head; and there is the less reason to do it, because the thing itself is so very obvious; for the truth of it, in fact, appears as oft as history relates the downfal of any empire or kingdom. We always find that a general neglect of virtue, and looseness of manners, were the forerunners of it, God having in readiness either some fierce spirits wherewith to chastise incorrigible sinners, when once they had filled up the measure of their iniquities; or else making them more eminent instances of his vengeance by bringing new and unheard of plagues upon their heads; or, lastly, by causing them to fall by their own home-bred divisions, by making them to fear where no fear was, and setting every man's hand against his brother's. Instances in each of these are so notorious, that I shall rather leave them to your own choice and reflection, than spend the time in relating things so well known, as

the destruction of the Canaanites, the desolation of Sodom and the cities about it, the ruin of the three first monarchies, the destruction of the Eastern empire by the Turks, and of the Western in a great measure by the Goths and Vandals, and, lastly, the miseries to which the people of this nation were reduced by the Saxons, Danes, and Normans. In all of these the effects are not more evident than the cause: it is not plainer they were destroyed, than it is that their vices had made them ripe for destruction. In this kingdom, particularly, the monkish historians of those times represent the universal degeneracy of manners to have been so great, that we can scarce imagine succeeding ages believed them; and we ourselves should find no small difficulty in it, had not this last age fallen into so strange a decay of virtue, piety, and common honesty, and, which perhaps is worse than all the rest, of modesty, and regard to honour and reputation: so that we should have too much cause to apprehend the most dreadful effects, did we not see these things discouraged by those whose examples have always had the greatest influence, which does not leave us without reasonable hopes of seeing a true Christian temper revive again amongst us.

And that not only it has been thus in fact, but

in reason always must be so, we shall find cause to conclude, if we consider, that besides the miraculous judgments of God, wherein his hand eminently appears, where he makes his own arm the executioner of his vengeance, and does himself as it were rally the causes together in order to produce such effects; besides his providential judgments, where he makes the stars in their courses to fight against us, terrifies us with storms and tempests, shakes the foundations of the earth under our feet, inverts the seasons, and makes the earth abortive in her fruits, infests the air with pestilential vapours, and consequently our bodies with languishing distempers; I say, besides these two sorts of judgments, which all the prophets since the world began have assured mankind were the genuine product of their sins, there is yet a third not less dismal to the apprehension of a considering man, which I will take the liberty to call natural judgments, and by which I mean such as, in the common and ordinary course of providence, fall upon persons and societies, as the result of their own ill counsels and conduct. I therefore call them natural, because, without God's appearing particularly to interpose, they spring from immoralities, as effects do from their causes.

And though upon a hasty view it may seem

strange to see a whole nation reduced to the condition of Solomon's covetous man; yet this often has been, and often will be; and upon serious reflection will not be thought strange. For what though a nation have strength of hands and policy, or strength of mind; what though they have strength of riches and strength of situation; in short, what though they have all those advantages that render them formidable to their enemies and secure in themselves; yet all these are not only rendered despicable and useless, but are sometimes turned into the very instruments of their destruction by men's immoralities and sins. For do not some of them naturally weaken men's bodies, impair their understandings, and shake their resolutions? do not others, and especially that vice the text points at, covetousness, naturally tend to contract men's thoughts within the narrow compass of their own concerns, and make them postpone the safety of the whole community, where their own private interests appear? Are there not some vices that contribute to make men cowards, and others that incline them to be treacherous and deceitful?

And if this be so, there is little need of argument, or illustration from example, to make it appear, that nothing less than miracle can support a people, where the generality are thus

tainted. For it is just the opposite qualities to these by which a nation can either be great, or even long subsist; strength, and wisdom, and courage, and liberality, mutual agreement, and fidelity to the common interest, with a generous neglect of a man's own concerns when they come in competition with the public good.

There is nobody that has not a sufficient stock of sin to make him not only a partaker in the miseries of a public calamity, but to make him a sharer in that guilt, that brings them down upon a nation: and therefore the most seasonable application I can make of what has been said is, that we should all seriously reflect upon our late condition and present circumstances, how very near we were falling into those miseries in which we have seen our neighbours involved, and that they are not yet so remote but that an offended God can soon turn them upon our heads. Let this call us to a hearty and sincere humiliation for our sins, and a thorough reformation of our past errors and follies, and this for the public as well as our own private interests: let us pray to God to strengthen our hands, and unite our hearts; to give us a true spirit of piety, and an extensive charity, which will suppress our pride and our spleen, will draw us nearer together than all the ties of secular interest, and which will give

us just hopes and assurance of those glorious promises, which the Prophets always made the Jews upon condition of their repentance, and which included as well temporal as eternal happiness.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT ON THE LAST SUNDAY IN LENT, 1689.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

1 Cor. xv. 19.

IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST, WE ARE OF ALL MEN THE MOST MISERABLE.

ST. PAUL'S chief business in this chapter is to establish the doctrine of the resurrection, which it seems some of his new converts at Corinth, notwithstanding the authority of his preaching, did in plain terms deny; as appears from the twelfth verse, for there he expostulates in this manner: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection from the dead?" They had been bred up perhaps in the principles of Plato's philosophy, had been taught to look down upon the body

with contempt, to esteem it the clog and prison of the soul, a place into which it was thrust by way of punishment, and from whence it was always struggling to disengage itself; and therefore when death had once set it free, they could by no means admit that it should again return to the same habitation, or that this could possibly tend to the consummation of its happiness; and a doctrine so directly repugnant as this to all their notions of a future state, was enough to prejudice them against the whole system of the Christian religion.

Others were puzzled with those difficulties that occurred in conceiving the manner of the resurrection. They could not imagine, that, after the dissolution of this body, the scattered particles should again be rallied into the very same frame and contexture as before, there being many objections to a bare natural enquirer, that help to confound his reason and obscure his faith; and therefore they desired to be excused, if they were not overhasty to believe what they found in a manner impossible to comprehend. But St. Paul makes it appear, that the incredulity of both these sorts of men proceeded either from ignorance, or a false notion of things.

First, by giving the philosopher to understand, that he was ignorant of the future state

of the body, and the glorious change it should undergo. It is indeed sown in corruption, but it shall be raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, but it shall be raised in glory: it is sown a natural body, but it shall be raised a spiritual body: in short, at its second meeting with the soul it shall appear a noble, glorious vehicle, every way suited to the activity of its inhabitant, and divested of all those infirmities which were formerly impediments to the free exercise thereof; and therefore their prejudice being grounded upon a false supposition, when that supposition is removed, it is fit the prejudice should be so too.

Secondly, to those whose minds are perplexed with the many difficulties that attend the notion, he does not indeed give satisfaction in their own way by entering into debate upon all their nice objections, or pretending to shew by what methods Almighty power acts; but (which is infinitely more convincing) he offers them an undeniable argument of fact, telling them that Christ, who died and was buried, did actually rise again the third day afterwards, of which some hundreds were witnesses, men of veracity, and beyond exception. What therefore has been, may be; and what was actually accomplished in Christ the head, may and shall be effected in the rest of his members.

But suppose that neither this nor any other argument the apostle could urge were able to remove their doubts and scruples; yet if they cannot believe that Christ is risen, to what end do they take upon them to be his disciples; what is the benefit they propose to themselves?

The enjoyment of another life, and the glory that shall hereafter be revealed, (whereof we no other way expect to be partakers but through the merits and powerful intercession of our Saviour,) are the only object of a Christian's hope: but if Christ did not rise, neither must we; there is an end of all future expectation; they that have died in this hope have been deceived, and are perished. And as for the advantages of this life, a man must have very little knowledge of the world that embraces the Christian principles as the most likely means of obtaining them; not that they are incompatible, but I think it will easily be allowed, that humility and self-denial, an unaffected contempt of the world, and an unbounded charity for all men, the keeping up a constant enmity with vice, neither palliating it by connivance, nor countenancing it by example, together with a steady impartial adherence to truth and justice, and the practice of that difficult but necessary duty, called reproof, are much more likely to promote our

interests hereafter, than improve our conditions here; where (with the generality) seldom less than the unlawful indulgence of the appetite is esteemed pleasure; and where profit is too often the price of honesty and integrity: "if therefore in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable."

It is probable St. Paul spoke these words with a particular reflection upon the present state of Christianity at that time, when the disciples were on every side beset with persecutions, and exposed to all the hardships of poverty, calumny, reproach, and even to death itself. But the truth of the assertion holds good at all times; and without regard to those uneasy circumstances, which may press harder at some times than at others, and did then in a most eminent manner lie heavy upon the Church, the conscientious Christian, if all his hopes in Christ are terminated in this life, "is of all men the most miserable," and that for these two reasons.

First, because Christ has given his followers no encouragement to look for happiness in this life.

Secondly, because the principles of his religion are not contrived for the obtainment of it.

But before I proceed, it will be necessary to remove one objection that lies in the way of

St. Paul's reasoning, and is too obvious to be passed over; i. e. that he seems to lay a much greater stress upon the doctrine of the resurrection than it can easily be supposed to bear, for he makes it the foundation of all our future hopes; and our religious observances, nay, our virtuous actions, no less than folly and impertinence without it. Thus in the words immediately before the text he argues, "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins: then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The text itself implies, that if there were no resurrection, a Christian would have no future prospect: and a little below he says it in express terms, "if after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." What can this mean? Is temperance then a useless virtue, and will the easy libertine be the most reasonable person, unless this doctrine of the resurrection be admitted? Will not the immortality of the soul supply its place; and is not that capable of rewards and punishments hereafter, though it should never more be united to the body? Did not this single article of faith influence the lives of the ancient philosophers,

and make the study and practice of morality in their judgments the only proper business of a reasonable creature? And since Christianity has refined the moral precepts, and raised many of them to a pitch of perfection, above what was known before the coming of our Lord, shall the soul of a righteous Christian fare worse than another man's; and must not he expect a place in those mansions of eternity, to which the good and virtuous have aspired from the beginning of the world? If so, what means St. Paul to recommend this brutish advice of an atheist, and propose it as reasonable, unless you will close with him in the belief of the body's resurrection? Or why should he despair of the soul's being happy hereafter, except you will allow its mechanical instrument to have its share? In answer to this we may consider,

First, that they to whom he applies himself did no more believe the immortality of the soul than the resurrection of the body; and to tell them that the one was of a different nature, and capable of subsisting after the dissolution of the other, was every jot as absurd as to tell them the body should revive. St. Paul often heard this from the Sadducees at home, and the Epicureans abroad: nay, the wisest philosophers, after all their fine discourses and highest

flights upon the soul's immortality, sunk at last into doubt and uncertainty, for want of revelation to buoy them up. It is revelation alone that can give security to a notion, which reason never had strength enough to support. They were not sure after all that it was not an error, but, as one of them expresses himself, if it was an error, it carried so many charms and so much comfort along with it, that he was resolved not to suffer it to be wrested from him, or exchange it for a truth so much to his disadvantage.

Now to these people, though he only mentions the resurrection of the body, yet we may reasonably suppose him to use a common figure in speech, whereby we expect to be understood of the whole, though we only express a part, and consequently the existence of the soul is implied; and his meaning at large is, that mankind, when all their generations were run out, should again be restored; souls and bodies should reunite, and receive a just retribution of their past actions; and that if this was not so, religion would be a vain and fruitless speculation.

But there is a second, and I presume a stronger, reason why St. Paul lays so much weight upon this doctrine, and that is, that the immortality of the soul would be insufficient without it. It is true, we can much bet-

ter conceive how the body should obstruct than improve the faculties of the mind; for we sensibly find that vapours cloud the understanding, that a vehement and irregular motion of the spirits distracts it, that a fall or accidental stroke upon the head has sometimes seemed to lay it asleep and extinguish it. From hence we apprehend, that could it once but shake off this dull matter, it would exert all its operations freely, and with almost infinite degrees of perfection above what we discern in the brightest moments of our lives: that in the body it works like a slave in the mine, low and in the dark, but out of it would make strange flights, and nothing would escape its penetration. These indeed are pleasing fancies for a contemplative man to amuse himself with, but how does it appear after all, that he is not mistaken? Can any man living tell (permit me for want of proper terms to use such as are only applicable to matter) what the frame and contexture of his mind is, how far the operations of it are assisted by a body, and how narrow the sphere of its activity would be without it? This we are sure of, that the body presents it with all the scenes of matter, and its circumstances; every sense, like a telescope, brings in surprising objects, to which without their help she must (as far as we are able to un-

derstand) have always remained an utter stranger. The soul and body make up the man, and the one or the other is but a part of him; and as upon their separation the body remains lifeless and inactive, so we only guess (and may be deceived when we do so) that the soul will be so much a gainer by the breach.

This perhaps may sound like heresy in philosophy, but will not I am sure be thought so in divinity: for whatever philosophers may imagine, Christians know that a separate soul is an incomplete being. God made it at first to inform a body, and has decreed its final union with one: and therefore since it is a maxim of undoubted verity that God would have all his creatures attain the perfection of their natures, it must undeniably follow, that a soul can have its utmost perfection only in conjunction with the body, and that in a separate state it does and must suffer some defects, which that union would supply. I say, the soul does gain some advantages by being in a body which it could not have without it, otherwise we must allow that at the resurrection God puts it into a state, an eternal unchangeable state, from whence it can receive no benefit, and that too under the notion of a reward.

When the Sadducees thought to baffle our Saviour upon this article of the resurrection, by

telling him of a woman that had seven husbands, and asking to which of them she should hereafter belong; he first rectifies their gross carnal notion of a future state, and then replies, "But as concerning the resurrection, have ye not read what God said to Moses in the bush, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; ye therefore do greatly err."

How does this prove the resurrection of the body? God is their God, and he is not the God of the dead. What then? Does this prove any thing more than that the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, do live or exist? Are we not sure that their bodies are dead and dissolved? and would not God be their God, and the God of the living too, though they should never rise again? This has occasioned some commentators to say, that our Saviour levelled his argument at that opinion of the Sadducees, that there was neither angel nor spirit; and that this being the ground of their disbelief of the resurrection of the body, he thought it enough to remove the foundation of their scruple; and it is plain, say they, it was enough, for the Sadducees found nothing to reply. But this will not satisfy; for our Lord expressly asserts it to be an argument for the resurrection of the body, and it is below

the dignity of his reasoning to make it no more than an argument ad hominem: which sort of arguments are of sufficient force indeed to silence the adversary, but do not always prove the point. His meaning therefore, and the force of his argument, must be this; that the souls of the patriarchs did, as appeared from that text, exist in a separate state; that all separate souls were in an incomplete, imperfect state; and therefore it must by a necessary consequence follow, that there should come a time when their souls and bodies should be reunited, and made as perfect as their natures would admit.

Thus much I hope may serve to justify St. Paul's reasoning upon the resurrection with relation to a future life. I come now to make good what he asserts of the present, viz. that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable;" by shewing,

First, that Christ has given his followers no encouragement to look for happiness in this life, for he has plainly told them his kingdom is not of this world; and the whole history of his life is but one continued comment upon that text. No pomp, no splendour, no pretence to civil power, no appearance of any thing the world calls rich or great, but an humble, meek con-

versation with the meanest people, attended with the usual inconveniences of it; being exposed to the rude assaults of the rabble, and the more scornful indignities of the better sort; and all at last closed with a painful and ignominious death. Thus the four Evangelists have represented to us the scene of his sufferings; and shall the disciples expect better measure than their Master? Is it not enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord? If we enquire how it fared with the Prophets of old, those that at a great distance saw our Saviour's day and were glad, those that plainly declared they desired a better country than this, that is, an heavenly; St. Paul tells us briefly, that some of them were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: that others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonments; they were stoned, they were sawn in sunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; and, lest the disciples of the Messiah should run into the same mistake with the rest of the Jews, and cheat themselves

with a fond expectation of temporal felicity, he seems never to have omitted any occasion of undeceiving them in this point. How frequently does he tell them, that they should be hated of all men for his name's sake; that the time should come, that whosoever killed them should think he did God good service; that he sent them forth as sheep amongst wolves, exposed to the malice of professed enemies, yet altogether defenceless! How carefully does he inculcate that lesson, that whoever would come after him must take up his cross and follow him; that he must not only forsake, but, when they came in competition with his service, must even hate father, and mother, and brethren, all that was dear and desirable, yea, and their own lives also, otherwise they could not be his disciples! To be a little more particular.

Would a Christian have riches? Our Lord's direction for obtaining them is, "Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have riches in heaven:" but if he demur to this advice, and would gladly keep the present possession in hope of purchasing the reversion some other way, let him hear what follows; "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This asto-

nished the disciples, they thought it beyond measure severe, and therefore he softens it by explaining himself of such as trusted in their riches. So then he allows indeed his followers to be proprietors or possessors of temporal things; there is no need of a vow of poverty, nor will the touch of silver and gold defile them; but to put a greater value upon them than they deserve, to distrust Providence for their sakes, barbarously to withhold them from a necessitous brother for fear they should hereafter stand in need of them themselves, this is dangerous to the last degree.

Would a Christian have honour and high place? In the twentieth chapter of St. Matthew, and at the twenty-sixth verse, he will find wherein it consists; "Whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and he that will be chief among you, let him be your servant;" for he is truly the most honourable that endeavours to make himself the most useful.

Would he have reputation and esteem in the world? Our Saviour's benediction goes on the other side; Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. But, on the contrary, Woe

unto you when all men speak well of you; for so did they of the false prophets, such as made religion subservient to their interest.

Is a Christian desirous of pleasure and ease? It will concern him likewise to know, that he that liveth in pleasures is dead whilst he liveth; and that though he be not expressly prohibited the gratification of any appetite, there being proper and suitable objects which may lawfully be pursued, yet there is so much likelihood of his being tempted to excess, and the danger is so great where the temptation prevails, that he cannot easily be unjust to himself in the restraint.

Thus we see, if our Lord's instructions and advice may take place, nay, if his prophetical declarations and predictions have credit, these things, which so much dazzle the eyes and understandings of carnal men, must not be the ingredients of a Christian's happiness; and accordingly the principles of his religion are not contrived for the obtainment of it: which is my second particular.

And here it is requisite to distinguish betwixt real and apparent happiness. The only real happiness to be had in this life is, as the philosopher calls it, a quiet mind; in the Christian language it is a good conscience. Apparent happiness is what the generality is pleased

to call so, and consists in the conveniences and advantages of this world, which are usually ranked under three heads, honour, riches, and pleasure: and the proof of this is very short; for I think it will be allowed on all hands, that though a man may be deceived in thinking himself happy when he is not, yet no man can be deceived on the other side in thinking himself unhappy, for that very thought makes him so; and therefore since good men, whose consciences do not reproach them, think and know themselves to be happy, let their outward circumstances be what they will; and since, on the other side, this whole world never did or can make any man happy, even in his own opinion, that has not peace within; it must follow, that peace of mind is the only true happiness, and that nothing else in this world has so much as a tincture of it but in conjunction with that.

The happiness, therefore, of this life, which the Christian principles are not contrived for, is this seeming and falsely styled happiness; for as for the real, it is the Christian's monopoly; no man has it besides himself. However, since the forementioned things are reputed to make up the happiness of this life, let us see who is likely to have the greatest share of them. That they are not simply in themselves unlaw-

ful, nor any person positively prohibited the use of them, is confessed; and therefore the Christian may put in his claim, and assert his title to them, as well as the rest of mankind: but then one condition must indispensably be observed, that he do not overvalue them in the purchase; for this may very easily be done, nay, is not without great caution and difficulty to be avoided. They are not only poor and and mean in their own nature, but have this peculiar property, that, at a distance, and whilst we are under the pursuit, they appear with a thousand charms to our imaginations, which immediately vanish so soon as we lay hold on them: we then discover that all was varnish and outside, and the substance we grasped at shrinks to nothing. Whatever this world affords above necessaries and conveniences, is a mere spectre of happiness; we follow it big with hopes of some hidden treasure, and find at last it only leads us to a sepulchre and a skeleton. Now if we be not extremely careful to discover this, and let our reason strictly examine what our imaginations are dazzled with, it is absolutely impossible we should not pay more for our share of vanity (for so the wise man found every thing in this world to be) than it is worth. How few are there but what are tempted, in some respect or other, to use un-

lawful means to attain their ends? and of such as confine themselves to right and justifiable ways, how few are there that do not exceed in the measure and proportion of them? Application to business, assiduity in attendance where our interest requires, a care to recommend ourselves by all honest and manly arts, without affectation or meanness of spirit, are in the number of those methods a man may take to gain his point without blushing; but if he have not a very watchful eye upon himself, his desires will insensibly improve into passions, his moderate endeavours into labour and toil, and the conclusion will at last be vexation of spirit. The conveniences of life are not many; the necessaries come within much less room, and it is every man's duty to endeavour to obtain them; yet even here solicitude and anxiety are forbidden; there must be a quiet resignation to the will of heaven, how forlorn soever our condition be, with this assurance, that God who has given life, will, if he see good, give the means to support it.

Now if we consider how successfully ill arts are used, and how frequently good are misapplied, we shall easily discern the disadvantages with which a poor Christian struggles for his share of this world, whilst others take a liberty of using all means to obtain what he must not

so much as desire with eagerness, or endeavour to get but by the strict rules of justice. But let him know, for his comfort, there is an happiness hereafter, truly and properly so called, without end and without defect, and to this his principles naturally conduct him.

The uncertainty and insufficiency of all things here below, the troubles and difficulties that are inseparable even from the honest pursuit of them, the mighty disappointment a warm imagination discovers in the enjoyment, together with the mutable condition of affairs, and the vexation that attends the loss of any thing we value, is enough to make a wise man sick of this world, though he had not the Christian's expectation of a better. But how is his indifference towards it, nay, his contempt of it, heightened, when he reflects upon that happy place which is the object of his hope! There he shall be divested of all frailty, and there perfection reigns; there all his doubtful conjectures will be improved into science, and his capacity enlarged to a satisfactory comprehension of the greatest mysteries of revelation; there the joys are pure and refined, and will transcend the imagination without palling the appetite; there the face of God will always appear, and the lustre exceed without dazzling our faculties; there, in short, the joys are such

as we can only say, in general, are infinite; they shall never abate either in their relish or duration. But to be more particular is not allowed in this state of imperfection: and perhaps the reason why God has revealed so little to us concerning this future state is, because he knows our nature not capable of receiving a fuller information; for St. Paul, who was once admitted upon the confines of this region of eternity, could yet only tell us in negative terms, that the delights there were such as "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" a description abundantly sufficient to excite our curiosity, though not inform it; and should, methinks, provoke the utmost of our industry to get to a place, where the things we look for are so extraordinary, where the gratification will be complete, and the painful access rewarded with an eternity of ease and quiet. To fit and qualify us for this is the business of Christianity. All those virtues that are recommended to us have a natural tendency to raise our thoughts, to quicken our intellectual faculties, to make us sit loose from the world, and, as St. Paul expresses it, "to have our conversation in heaven" whilst we live upon earth: and whoever by a constant and habitual practice of piety and virtue has arrived at this, will

easily discern, that whilst a man has his eye upon this recompense of reward, he may not only with patience sustain, but even with joy and comfort reflect upon, all the disappointments and cross accidents of this life, which sensual men sink under; he will be convinced, that "the light afflictions of this life, which are but for a moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The miseries of this world (if it be fit for a Christian to call them so) are of two sorts; either such as Providence seems more particularly to have an hand in, as pain, sickness, loss of friends and relations, together with all casual impair in our fortunes, and that part we bear in public calamities, as members of the same body, though they may not actually affect our persons; or else such as proceed from the malice of ill men, the chief whereof are, invading our estates by fraud and rapine, exposing our reputations by calumny and slander, or doing violence to our persons by force and cruelty. Now when any of these befal a wicked man, his case is desperate: he had fixed his heart upon temporal happiness, and sees himself bereft of it; he would fain find relief, but knows not where to address for it; and, which is worst of all, his present condition is uneasy, yet he has no prospect of a better. "Howl,

therefore, O wicked man! lament and mourn, for thy destruction shall come suddenly, as pain upon a woman in travail: thou shalt call, but the Lord will not answer; and though others shall say, Peace, peace, yet flatter not thyself, for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." How disconsolate, how deplorable a state is this! But as for the righteous, it is not so with him. If God is pleased to retrench his blessings, he looks upon it to be as much a mark of the divine favour, as when they were multiplied upon him: he knows he has either made an ill use of them, or that God foresees they would some way or other have been snares to him; and therefore he adores that gracious Providence which continually watches over us for good. If he suffers by the malice of wicked men, he knows by whose permission they act, and who it is that says to the proud waves, "Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther." His arm is not shortened that he cannot help; and they that put their trust in him may rest fully assured that they shall never be confounded. A good man measures not his reputation by the estimate the world makes of it, well remembering that there is one who seeth and judgeth, one who "seeth the heart and trieth the reins," and in whose eyes if he can appear blameless, he looks down with

scorn upon their censure, not forgetting the woe that is pronounced against those whom all men speak well of; for so did they of the false prophets, such as made religion subservient to their interests. Nay, further, if God should give him up into the hands of his enemies, to be despitefully and barbarously treated, yet the bare reflection upon his own innocence, and well-grounded confidence in God's protection, will carry him calmly through the worst usage; but when to this is added the expectation of future happiness, with an assurance that all his sufferings tend to his advancement in another life, what joy does it spread over the soul, and how unconcerned does he behold the active malice of the devil and his angels, which at the worst is but like a rough sea that hastens to land us upon a coast of eternal quiet!

To conclude. We live in a changeable and uncertain state; and to one that seriously considers of it, it may seem that Providence has subjected it to confusion and disorder, to prevent our being too fond of it. Prosperity is entailed neither upon the wise nor the strong; health, riches, power, and honour, whatever is to be had in this life, is in its own nature fickle and slippery; sometimes the prime object of our desires is wrested from us, if not, we of

course must leave it; and what then have we more to do than entirely to comply with our Lord's advice, to "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal," that is, where neither chance nor ill design can affect us!

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT THE SECOND LENT AFTER THE REVOLUTION, 1690.

ON WORLDLY CARES.

LUKE viii. 7.

AND SOME FELL AMONG THORNS, AND THE THORNS SPRANG UP AND CHOKED IT.

THESE words are a part of that parable of the sower, whereby our blessed Lord thought fit to represent the different success his doctrine would meet with, according to the variety of men's tempers and inclinations; and himself has been pleased so fully to explain them, that there remains no room for comment or illustration: for the seed, he tells us, "is the word of God; and that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches,

and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection;" the affairs of this world so far engross their thoughts, that they cannot long retain impressions of another. And we may observe here, that not only solicitous and eager cares, but the softer pleasures of life, are compared to thorns, because both are alike in those effects from which our Saviour raises the resemblance, both very apt to overrun the soil, need no cultivation to improve their growth, and stubbornly keep their ground where they have once taken root.

But must we then lay aside all the cares of this life, before we can sufficiently be disposed to receive the Gospel? By no means; that is impossible: there is no living without care, nor no tolerable living without some degrees of pleasure. But these are plants that are extremely prone to degenerate into weeds; they multiply, they grow luxuriant, and, if not close pruned and watchfully kept under, will suffer nothing to spring up with them. It is not expected we should wholly neglect the affairs of life, or obstinately renounce those objects to which our appetites are so strongly inclined, but anxious cares and unlawful pleasures must be abandoned; they are directly opposite to the word of God, and our breasts are not capable of entertaining both at once; for "some

fell amongst thorns"—and what is the event? "the thorns sprung up and choked it."

The cares which our Lord condemns in this place are those that are employed in obtaining wealth and pleasure. Wealth is the great purveyor to our senses, and pleasures are the provisions it brings in: for by pleasure (I mean worldly pleasure) we understand the enjoyment of those various objects that are grateful to our respective senses; and these so universally, so importunately solicit our thoughts, that the wisest and best of men, who are armed with resolution, practised in self-denial, and from serious reflections and solid reasoning are arrived at a judicious contempt of this world, even these, I say, have need to be always upon their guard, and will never be set above the watchman's care; and, on the other hand, the most ignorant, stupid, and unthinking creatures, when these are in view, seem enlivened and animated by another spirit; they become capable of plots and designs, advance regularly towards their ends, many times to the reproach of finer wits, who are very seldom their competitors with success: in short, the pursuit of pleasure has turned many, very many, wise men into fools, and that of riches has often refined heavy people up to a degree of subtilty

and cunning that has entitled them to other names, *blockheads into knaves.* They work by a powerful and almost irresistible magic, which turns men into all shapes, and against which nothing but the grace of God is proof. However I do not intend to dwell long here, because our duty with respect to these is, in general at least, well known and stated. The necessaries of life are all that we are allowed to be concerned for, and even this must be with an entire subordination to our spiritual interest: without food and clothing we know not how to subsist, and yet these are neither to be sought in the first place, nor with anxiety; there is a more certain and easier way to obtain them; for "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." As for the conveniencies of life, it becomes us to make the catalogue of them as short as we can, and it is the concern of every wise man to take care they do not cost him more than they are worth; but all beyond them can scarce be desired, I doubt is never sought without a fault; for not only a Christian but a philosopher is puzzled to know how to set a value upon any thing beyond convenience; and he would less know how to justify the expence of time and

pains in obtaining what he could not prove rendered him either better or happier than before.

It will be objected, perhaps, that riches are noble instruments in the hands of wise and good men, enabling them to glorify God, and do good to mankind in a more conspicuous manner than they could possibly do without them: that they are fuel to those admirable virtues of charity and beneficence, whereby they are made to shine and blaze out, when otherwise they must have glowed obscurely within their breasts; and therefore they may reasonably endeavour to possess themselves of what they only desire in order to become more useful to the world. In answer to which it must be allowed, that riches are good or ill as they are used, and he that has a large heart cannot have his hands too full; but I fear history scarce affords a single instance of any man that laboured for riches under a pretence of doing good, that ever rightly employed them when he had them; the good he designs is to himself and his own family; he seldom is at the trouble to look abroad for sharers, and if any be laid out to public uses, either pride and ostentation manifestly appear in the disposition, or else he dedicates a part to God's service in

hopes of compounding with him for the indirect and dishonest getting of the whole.

As for pleasures, it must be confessed we are not positively forbid the use of them; nay, we may advance a great deal farther, and affirm, that there is not that sort of pleasure in the world which a reasonable creature would allow himself, to which we may not approach honestly and legally. Yet in the mean time we must not forget, that he that liveth in pleasures is dead whilst he liveth; the use is allowable, but it must be sparing, only to season human life, or as a smoother vehicle to help down with less disgust the more unpalatable and bitterer parts of it: and these three conditions must inviolably be observed, without which the least of our enjoyments cannot be innocent: first, we must make a legal choice of our pleasures; secondly, we must use none but legal means for their attainment; and, thirdly, when we have gained the possession of our desires, we must never indulge ourselves in the enjoyment beyond the rules of strict temperance.

And the bare mention of these, I presume, may suffice, without any farther enlargement upon them; because human reason alone, if undepraved and diligently attended to, is almost a sufficient guide in practical life; this

law is written upon every man's heart, and is legible to all that will but search for it there. It is scarce possible for any man to think of pleasures, in themselves unlawful, without a severe check from within; conscience never fails to be upon the guard, but does as certainly forbid here, as it will reproach and accuse hereafter. Nor is any man's understanding so defective, as not to be able to inform him when he transgresses the rules of justice in the pursuit of his desires; honesty and sincerity are plain things, and wit and artifice are, God be thanked, much more requisite to deface and cast false colours upon them, than to support them. As for temperance, it is utterly impossible for any one man to give the rule and measure to another; in this we must all judge for ourselves, and must expect to be judged according to the integrity of our hearts; yet there is one plain rule, whereby we are secured from the danger of offending; it is the physician's rule, (so unanimously recommended for the health of the body, and contributes not less to that of the mind,) always to rise with an appetite; for if people are disposed to use the utmost of their liberty, and will adventure to tread upon the confines of excess, there is great danger the temptation should prove too strong,

and that God should be provoked to withdraw his grace.

But instead of descending further into the particulars of those things that are the objects of our care, I shall choose rather to keep close to my text, where worldly business seems to be represented as dangerous in its own nature; and I shall endeavour to make appear that it is so, by shewing,

First, that the most necessary cares of this life, even those that are employed in the support of life itself, are not in their own nature subservient to our spiritual interest.

Secondly, that where they are suffered to grow and multiply upon us, they are prejudicial and in the end fatal to it.

Thirdly, by way of inference, that therefore we ought to change the object of our cares, think less of ourselves and more of other people, make their welfare our business and concern, and this would certainly yield us fruit in another life.

And first, the most necessary cares of this life are not in their own nature subservient to our spiritual interests. Our Saviour's business into this world was to bring future life and immortality to light, to open that remote and till then obscure scene, and give us a prospect

of endless glory; and the business of the Gospel is to put an edge upon our appetites towards it, to quicken our endeavours, and furnish us with instructions whereby we may infallibly arrive at the possession of it. Whatever has a tendency to this end does reasonably employ our most serious thoughts, but every thing else is an impediment in our way, and makes the journey more tedious and difficult. Now whether worldly cares, even the most necessary of them, are of this kind, will best be understood, if we consider the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, the twenty-fifth verse to the end of the chapter, where Jesus Christ expressly treats of them; "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what you shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Here the disciples are taught, that life, properly called, is that happy state they were to look for hereafter, in comparison of which this present life neither deserved the name nor their thoughts; and for the body, it was the preservation of it to a glorious resurrection that ought to be their business, and all provisions for it here were low considerations. But he goes on, "Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly

Father feedeth them: are ye not much better than they?" He had told them these cares were below their thoughts, and what were the concerns of greatest importance to them; but foreseeing they would raise an objection from the frail condition of human nature which stands in need of constant provisions and supplies, he takes care to prevent it, by putting them in mind that they had a Providence, an heavenly Father, to depend upon, who, as he preserved the inferior creatures by his own voluntary bounty, would much more supply what he knew they stood in need of, who had a higher title to his protection, and business of greater moment to employ themselves about. He bids them look upon the very flowers of the field, observe with how much beauty God had decked them, and then think whether it were likely he should leave man destitute of such clothing as necessity and decency required. And here the bare apprehension of infidelity, and want of reliance upon the divine power and goodness, does apparently warm his sacred breast, and he urges it home with force and vehemence; "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven;" a creature made only for the ornament of the universe, to be looked upon a day or two, and then disappear for ever, and

whose next and only use is to be burnt; "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" he therefore repeats and inculcates it a second time, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:" the Gentiles, that are without God in the world, whereof some absolutely deny his providence, and none conceive aright of it: the Gentiles, that seek for happiness in this life, and either have none, or very obscure, imperfect, and unsatisfactory notions of the future: they seek, they labour after these things; "but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Make it your principal business to be rightly instructed in my doctrine, which teaches you to undervalue, to despise, nay, to hate this life and all that belongs to it, when they come in competition with your future hopes, to turn all your endeavours, all the powers of your soul this way, "and then all these things shall be added unto you."

And now what could our blessed Lord have said more to express his mean opinion of all worldly business and employment, in comparison of that which has future happiness and immortality for its object, and to make us understand that he did not think the most ne-

cessary of our cares for this life contributed to mend our condition in that which is to come? He has not indeed absolutely forbid the pains we take for temporal things, and the reasonable use of them when we have them; that could not consist with the present economy of the world; but he has postponed them to all future regards, he has drawn them into as narrow a compass as is possible, and for those that remain he will not allow them to be the proper business of our thoughts; μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, take no thought, according to the most favourable construction of the word, have no serious, deliberate, anxious thoughts, but employ your last, your slightest thought, about these matters. Let the animal take care of itself, and do not use that noble faculty you have above brutes in providing only for such things as you enjoy in common with them, and which they after all obtain with every jot as much ease and dexterity as yourself.

When Martha was busy in the preparation of a decent supper for our Lord, one would have imagined her to have been employed not only in a commendable, but a meritorious service; and it was no small disappointment to her, that upon her complaint her sister was not dismissed to her assistance with reproof. She expected the blessed Jesus should have

told Mary, that the burden of the family was not to rest upon her sister alone; that domestic business must be done, and therefore it was fit they should bear an equal part in the dispatch, that then both of them would be at leisure to attend his preaching without interruption. Something of this nature, it is plain, she expected, but we hear nothing like it from his lips; on the other side he gives Martha to understand, that her business was an incumbrance, such as made her go on more heavily in the paths of life, and gave her sister the start and advantage.

Secondly, we see here how little conntenance our Saviour affords to worldly cares, and how almost inconsistent he thought them with the design of his Gospel; and this will yet farther appear if we consider in the *second* place, that where these cares are suffered to grow and multiply upon us, they are prejudicial, and in the end fatal, to our spiritual interests. Man consists of soul and body, two parts which in their own nature are extremely different from each other, the one being an immaterial, immortal, and thinking principle; the other a material, corruptible instrument, whereby sensible perceptions are conveyed to the mind; accordingly God has been pleased to make two different states of life, agreeable to their respective natures, and

in which each of them successively has the predominant part. This present life is the bodily, sensible, and mortal state; here flesh and blood, sense and passion reign; but that which is to come will be spiritual, intellectual, and immortal; where contemplation and the love of God will be the noblest part of our employment, and where the body is of such inferior consideration, that it is not capable of admittance there till it becomes spiritualized, and has changed its nature. And from hence the inference is unavoidable, that the affairs and business of this life cannot possibly as such be subservient to the interests of another; they have different objects and are different in their own natures; so very different, that St. Paul says, "the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and that these two are contrary the one to the other." The soul seems here to be perfectly out of its way; it is unequally joined to an unworthy companion, that drags it about, and brings it under necessities and distresses, exposes it to temptations and snares, nay, continually endeavours to betray it to utter ruin, and always sides with its mortal enemy: if therefore by frequent conflicts and a steady conduct it can at last get the better of this deceitful friend, if after much struggling it can get loose and disen-

gage itself, the victory and conquest is very great, and the ungrateful body will share in it; but the present advantage to the soul is only safety and quiet, whereby it is more at leisure to attend to its own improvement, either in a moral or natural sense, by bringing the passions into subjection, or attaining to higher degrees of knowledge and wisdom; and both are done by a vigorous and continual exercise of the intellectual faculties, in frequent contemplations, and serious reflections, whereby the soul is truly enlarged, and made more capable of comprehending the divine perfections; for the mind like the body gains strength by exercise, and that of a good man, it is reasonable to believe, will never arrive at a determined growth. The supreme happiness of that exalted state we look for hereafter does (we may without presumption hope) consist not only in a full display of the divine Majesty, and laying open all his wonderful attributes to our utmost penetration, but in a constant improvement likewise of our minds; we shall always learn, and always advance; and though we can never arrive at infinite knowledge, yet our comfort is it will be unlimited: we shall never come to a degree beyond which we cannot go; for besides that it would not well consist with the happiness of so active a principle

as the soul ever to be at a full stop, nor with the boundless goodness of God to forbid their farther progress, we know not how to conceive of different degrees of glory hereafter, but only as of different degrees of knowledge, whereby some are raised (or rather may raise themselves, for there grace ends) to a reason and closer intimacy with God himself: for this reason, abstraction from the world has ever been recommended by divines of all ages and all religions, and a habit of thinking has ever been esteemed a necessary preparative to the future life of contemplation. The Son of Sirach observes, "that the wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure, and he that hath little business shall become wise;" and after having mentioned several mechanics, whose minds and thoughts were entirely taken up in their respective business, he concludes, that these trust to their hands, and every one is wise in his own work, but they shall not be sought for in public council, nor sit high in the congregation; they shall not sit on the judge's seat, nor be found in the place where parables are spoken. And what is here said of mechanics only, may be applied to all studies and business whatsoever, if they are really worldly, if they are used to gain power, or honour, or reputation, or riches, or pleasures, or whatever

else this world affords; if the intention be not upright, the means just, and the end good, they will never advance us in the esteem of God and good men. Some perhaps will from hence infer, if worldly business be in its own nature of no consequence to us with relation to a future state, it were fit people should be advised to let it alone, to betake themselves to retirement, and the improvement of their understandings, without farther regard to temporal affairs than is absolutely necessary to a present support. But this is carrying the matter too high, and beyond the intention or import of what has hitherto been said; for we must remember; First, that this life is a state of probation and trial, wherein God is pleased to make experiment of the temper and complexion of our minds, and therefore it is not only necessary we should be subject to frailty and exposed to vanity of temptations; but it is fit we should give some proof how we are able to maintain ourselves against them, and must know it is more honourable to conquer than to shun them.

Secondly, this is a sociable life, wherein human infirmities make us absolutely necessary to each other; and therefore since I am forced to use the help of others, it becomes me likewise, according to my condition and ability, to be as serviceable as I can

to them again. Nor has this world a more worthless creature in it than an idle man, that does not endeavour at least to be useful in his generation.

Thirdly, that in all societies there must be subordination, otherwise it is impossible peace and order should subsist. Some must govern, and others obey; some must teach, and others learn; and since God has given men different talents, different degrees of judgment, and different kinds of ability, those that sincerely think themselves qualified may, without the imputation of a criminal ambition, honestly endeavour to post themselves where they hope to serve mankind with most advantage; nay, it is their duty so to do.

Fourthly, we must consider that all those actions of our lives, wherein the practical virtues are faithfully exercised, are not to be brought into the account of worldly cares; they are really spiritual ones, having the subjection of our passions and our future advancement always in view.

Fifthly, it must be owned, that the lowest and meanest of our cares, even those that are employed about the animal life, wherein reason scarce needs to be concerned, much less can it be improved; even those, I say, are so far good, as they answer the ends of God's

providence, who has been pleased to make this world just such, and no other, than it is; who has thought fit the soul should bear the burden of bodily infirmities in this life; and who does abundantly recompense that trouble, by making the body in the real life an obedient and useful vehicle for ever.

From which particulars it is very manifest, not only that the affairs and employments of this life must be carried on, but that it is every man's duty to bear his part: yet this arises from the frail condition of human nature, which makes them necessary, not eligible, to a reasonable creature; they have nothing valuable in their own natures, it is only circumstance recommends them; and therefore our most important business should be, to contrive so to order our cares, that they may turn to our real benefit and advantage. And this is most effectually done by changing the object of them, by thinking less of ourselves and more of other people, especially of those who most want, and are best entitled to, our cares. It becomes us to be very careful and sparing in our choice of them; for if we suffer them to grow and multiply upon us, they will be prejudicial, and in the end fatal, to our spiritual interest: which brings me to my third and last particular.

This life and the next divide all our cares,

and the great difficulty lies in doing justice betwixt them; for this is present, always importunes us, has our senses for its constant solicitors, and the only danger of partiality is on this head; whereas the other is remote, addresses only to our reason and faith, is very frequently unregarded, and many times not understood; and yet, under all these disadvantages, it is in this life that the other is to be provided for. Possession and fruition will come hereafter, but the right and title must now be secured: we must have our conversation in heaven whilst we live upon earth; and if ever we hope to arrive there, we must begin by withdrawing our affections from the world. Now if we consider how great this work of salvation is, and with how much difficulty it is performed, what a constant watch must be kept over the appetites, and what frequent conflicts must be had with temptations, how frail human nature is, and how perverse the will, and how little, many times, our best endeavours avail in supplying their defects, we must be forced to confess, that all our cares are too little in this service, and such as are turned another way are misemployed. Nay, it were well if they were only misemployed, and that were the worst that could be said of them, for then we should not lose ground in our main design, but

only move on more slowly; but the impotent condition of this life is such, that the more it has of our cares, the more it stands in need of them; we make provision for the flesh—and what is the consequence? we apply it to fulfil the lusts thereof: the desires are enlarged by our endeavours to supply them, and our appetites grow unruly by being fed. Those things we long for afford not the satisfaction they promised; they are divested of all the advantages fancy gave them before enjoyment, yet they serve to make us more inquisitive and impatient; they first give the mind a false relish of pleasure, and then engage it in a fruitless pursuit, whereby it becomes restless and uneasy, and every day less able to disentangle itself, till at last tired out, and rather amused than pleased, it lazily gives itself up to the conduct of sense, is left destitute of God's grace, and irrevocably lost to all eternity.

This is the deplorable condition of a soul that does not attend to its true interest; it is first cheated and cajoled into slavery, and then stupidly acquiesces under it. And here I might offer a great many reasons to induce us to direct our cares aright, to settle our affections on things above and not on things below, drawn from the vast disparity that is betwixt them; from the shortness of this life, the uncertainty

and insufficiency of every thing it affords, and particularly from that grating consideration, against which no human wisdom or foresight can provide, that in spite of our teeth we are carried down with the stream of affairs, and oftentimes smart more severely for other men's faults and follies than our own; this is a sore evil, and enough to make a wise man sick of this world, though he had not the Christian's expectation of a better. On the other side, when the future life opens upon him, he immediately sees doubts and fears dispelled; even hope, the last and surest support of our drooping spirits here, has there no place; a full fruition shall swallow up his faculties, and all that he enjoys he shall for ever possess; there he meets with all the ingredients of perfect happiness, and finds every one of them within his reach: for the face of God always shines upon him, "in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore."

But instead of proceeding upon these heads, I shall briefly conclude with this inference, that since our worldly cares are so dangerous to us, what shall we say to those who are perpetually employed in the pursuit of their vices, and gratifying their passions? If necessary food scarce deserves our thoughts, what shall we

say to those that study the arts of gluttony, that count it an accomplishment to understand (as they call it) good eating, are more solicitous about dressing than obtaining the meat, and value a dish more for the novelty than the wholesome nourishment it affords? What shall we say to that unreasonable expence of time which their servants are at in providing and ordering before, and themselves after, it appears upon the table? What shall we say to that profuse charge which the bare disguising of their meat amounts to, where so much pains is taken to curse what God had blessed, and to render wholesome diet uneasy to the stomach, only that it may more gratefully touch the palate as it passes? Do these men think they are laudably employed, or that this is not taking thought for the body in the most criminal sense? It is carrying their thoughts upon this subject infinite degrees beyond what our Saviour seems here to apprehend; and how lightly soever they may esteem of this low, this despicable, and unmanly vice, it will behove them seriously to consider what St. Paul says to the Philippians concerning some carnal Christians of that time, and how far his words are applicable to themselves; "Many walk," says he, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of

Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things."

If the kingdom of God and his righteousness is to be our first and chiefest care, what shall we say of those that never admit him into their thoughts? Whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of folly, shifting the scene from one vice to another, and whose most innocent intervals are idleness and impertinence; nay, what shall we say of those that do despite to the name and worship of God? that laugh at revelation, because they know not how it is conveyed, and ridicule religion as a politic contrivance? that degrade the Son of God himself because they cannot comprehend the mystery of his Godhead, and insolently set up their own reason against the testimony of the eternal word? These men would do well to consider, that their friend Machiavel had other thoughts; there is nothing he more earnestly, more zealously inculcates, than the necessity of keeping up a face of religion, and all public demonstrations of duty and honour to God. He expressly says, obedience to princes is founded and secured in that awe and reverence people have towards God; that where open profaneness and neglect of divine offices takes place, there licentious and dissolute manners,

with headstrong passions, stubbornness, and disobedience, grow up so fast, that it is absolutely impossible for government to subsist: and therefore he recommends nothing more heartily to the supreme magistrate, than that he take care to discountenance and punish with severity all open irreligion and profaneness.

But a second inference to be made is, that if necessary cares as they grow upon us become prejudicial to our spiritual interest, how highly criminal must they be who set no bounds to their cares, even where the necessities of the body require they should be forborne? What shall we say to ambitious and covetous old men, who are scarce ever known to say, It is enough; who enlarge their desires as the sea, and are commonly then most eager to get, when they are most oppressed with age and infirmities, when there is neither time nor appetite to enjoy? yet they still drudge on for a name, and foolishly load themselves with thick clay. This would appear the most unaccountable and surprising madness in nature; but that, as Solomon has observed, it is common amongst men, that a man should have riches, wealth, and honour, so as to want nothing for his soul of all that he desireth; yet that he should not dare to eat thereof himself,

but a stranger must enjoy it, is a piece of sinful self-denial, that in appearance carries infinitely more severity than all that ever the Church of God enjoined, nay, than all the unwarrantable penances of the Church of Rome.

The third and last inference I shall make is, that if contemplation be the true and proper business of the other life, for which we must prepare ourselves in this by withdrawing as much as we can from sensible objects, and being ready and disposed when God shall call us to enter upon that state, how utterly incapable do people render themselves of the place, who never accustom themselves to think at all! There are such shadows of men in the world that never think seriously, never think usefully; that are still mighty busy, without real business; restless and unquiet, yet always idle: hurrying from one place and company to another, without any premeditated design or occasion; they keep their minds constantly upon the flutter, in a perplexed sort of motion that has no peculiar tendency, and the main business after all is only to shun themselves; to keep those uneasy inmates their consciences from setting their sins and follies before their eyes. I hope none that hear me this day fall under this character; if they do, I am sure the greatest part of what I have said is very un-

seasonable and inapplicable to them. I would recommend business, worldly business, to these rather than none at all; and I do not question, but he that exercises his thoughts regularly and coherently, though the subject may not be altogether such as one would wish, is much nearer heaven than a thoughtless careless man: for he that uses to think, will sometimes think right; and if God at such a time shall please to afford him the grace of repentance, he is already naturally disposed for the business of another life: but the other renders himself an unfit subject even for grace to work upon; he has brought his mind to a senseless inactivity, so as neither to apprehend wherein the dignity of its nature, nor prosecute those ends for which it was created.

To conclude therefore, let us beseech Almighty God to give us the assistance of his holy Spirit, whereby we may be enabled every day more and more to wean ourselves from this world, to shake off the cares and incumbrances of this life, and to make gradual approaches towards the next. And since contemplation is our best and noblest employment, O may it be his good pleasure to direct our thoughts aright; to enlighten our understandings, and quicken our apprehensions; to give

us lively and bright ideas of the invisible world, and a firm and strong faith; a faith to that degree, as may be to us "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

A

SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE THIRTIETH OF JANUARY, BEFORE KING WILLIAM, IN THE YEAR 1691 OR 1692.

MARK iii. 24.

IF A KINGDOM BE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, THAT KINGDOM CANNOT STAND.

OUR Lord is pleased, with this political maxim, to confute the blasphemous calumny of the Jews, who not only withstood the evidence of his glorious miracles, but maliciously ascribed them to an infernal power; an imputation as senseless as it was impious; for they saw plainly, that the end of his works was their benefit and advantage, to give sight to the blind and feet to the lame; and the end of his preaching was to improve their understandings, and reform their manners. And these were ends so directly opposite to the interest of that enemy of mankind, that if he contributed towards it, he must act a very weak part, and

such as at last would certainly destroy his authority. His empire in the world depends upon men's ignorance and passions; and he that helps to remove the one, or subdue the other, so far lessens his dominion, and shews the infallible way entirely to shake it off: and therefore these are practices he cannot be suspected of: he very well knows what the event will be, that if a kingdom be divided against itself, even his kingdom, that has indefatigable industry and the utmost degree of subtilty on its side, and too strong a disposition on the part of his vassals to support it, yet this kingdom cannot stand. By this occasional use and application, our blessed Saviour has established the authority of this aphorism, and this day, this unfortunate day, has furnished us with the most deplorable instance of it. We are now assembled to humble ourselves before God, for the guilt this nation contracted in the murder of a religious and virtuous prince, who carried as many noble qualities with him to the throne, and some as unusual, as ever shone from so high a sphere. His younger years had been cultivated with care, and his riper improved by variety of experience: his judgment was sound, his apprehension quick, his resolution firm, his intention sincere; and to these was added a zeal for religion and an unspotted life, which

shewed the power of it in his heart, and set him above the false reasonings and temptations of a court. His very faults, for this imperfect state of life allows no mortal to be exempted from them, had a near affinity to virtues, and were particularly such as great and good men are most obnoxious to: for, excepting some virulent, malicious spirits, who set themselves professedly to blacken his memory, without regard to truth or common decency, the generality even of those who blamed his conduct have thought it sufficient to complain, that he indulged the Queen in too much confidence, which was almost an unavoidable effect of love, and that he had a certain easiness, and inclination towards those he thought well of, which made him give up himself to their counsels, many times in contradiction to his own superior judgment: but that upon other occasions he discovered a stiffness of temper, that made even his favours want much of that grace, which a ready condescension would have given them, and made him difficultly depart from an error that he had at any time the misfortune to close with. Yet the two former of these are the result of good-nature; and the other to some degree is woven into the very texture of a great mind. Now when such a prince takes up the sceptre, we are ready with confidence

to promise ourselves, that under his shadow we shall live; live easily, plentifully, honourably, and securely; retaining ever a warm and lively sense of those inestimable blessings derived upon us from his prudent administration, and always ready to make such returns of duty as may lighten his cares, and induce him not to repent his labours. But how were all these promising hopes blasted, and how useless were these virtues and endowments rendered, in a kingdom divided against itself! Here was the cloud that appeared in the very dawn of this reign, which too plainly presaged the violent storms and tempests that succeeded: for though I do not intend to enter into this tragical history, which is abundantly known, and still sits close upon the hearts of good men, who are concerned for the welfare of these nations, yet I cannot but observe, that from the first moment of his reign there seems not to have been a sufficient confidence betwixt this excellent prince and his people. They frequently presented him with dutiful addresses, and the humblest assurance of fidelity and affection to his person and government; but these were accompanied with a petition of right; and for that they begged a legal security. His Majesty, on the other hand, was not wanting in grace and condescension: he told

them they should find him indulgent to their desires, and that he would inviolably preserve their rights, but thought it became them to trust to his word, that he might have it in his power to demonstrate to them they were as secure in that as in a law. How small in appearance was this disagreement! The Commons declared this petition to be the sum of all they would ask; the King freely assured them they should have the full effect of it, but thought his honour touched if it passed into a law. Yet from hence the difference widened betwixt them, which, with the misunderstandings among the people themselves, did at last bring on the fatal ruin of both.

I will not descend lower into particulars, for I think the time may be more usefully spent, and more agreeably to the present occasion, by keeping close to the subject before me; which I shall endeavour to do, by shewing, first, when, and in what sense, a kingdom may be said to be divided against itself; secondly, waving other divisions, I shall consider from what causes those concerning religion may arise.

And first, let us consider when and in what sense a kingdom may be said to be divided against itself. By "a kingdom" we are to understand any political constitution, any society

of men who are entered into mutual obligations and dependencies for their respective benefit and security, whatever the frame and model of their government may be: for whether the power be in one or more hands, whether it be more or less limited, which way soever it is derived, or on whomsoever it is conferred, yet the end is always the same—the public good. The text is indifferently applicable to all; and therefore as a kingdom may then truly be said to be at unity with itself when the heads, and hearts, and hands of all are disposed to concur in the common safety and interest; when every individual member, according to the station he is in, does sincerely, and as much as in him lies, contribute to the public weal; so a kingdom, on the other side, is so far divided against itself, so far the very design and first intention of associating themselves together is disappointed and lost, as any of them breaks loose from the knot in which all are tied, and basely, nay, foolishly, quits the public, to pursue a particular and private, interest.

The great and dangerous divisions in a kingdom can be but two; the first betwixt the king and his people; the other betwixt the people themselves, when they are broken into factions. The first may come to pass two ways; viz. when the prince goes into such measures as are

inconsistent with the welfare of the people: for in such a case, how plausible soever the pretence may be, how much soever the honour, wealth, and safety of the public are said to be the aim of his councils; yet the truth of causes will appear in their effects. Men's understandings may for a while be imposed upon; but their senses will infallibly undeceive them, and they must at last, in spite of their teeth, see and feel things as they are; and this will certainly occasion a breach; for in all ages and places in the world, though the people have often been so unhappy as not to know their true interest, yet they have always been true to what they thought so. But this, one would imagine, was a case not to be supposed, being grounded upon almost an impossible supposition, that the prince can think himself to have an interest distinct from his people: for does not his ease and security at home, his honour and the figure he makes abroad in the world, depend entirely upon the wealth, and strength, and good affections of his people? It is very true, and, blessed be God, is not to be supposed of the prince whom we have the happiness to serve. But there is no arguing against fact; and if the histories of past ages, which afford infinite examples, had been silent in the matter, yet the present age has shewn

us, that ambition, or bigotry, or a false notion of greatness, can carry princes over the necks of their subjects, and make them content to sacrifice millions, provided they may govern those that remain their own way. But division betwixt the prince and his people may likewise arise from their want of duty, when they dispute his just commands, or forbear to concur in his reasonable determinations; for this renders his authority feeble, forces him upon new methods for its support, and where the ordinary means of doing it are denied, he is under a necessity of having recourse to those that are less usual. This was the case of our unfortunate prince: he found the nation involved in a war, and could not obtain sufficient supplies to carry it on, but upon such conditions as he thought unreasonable or dishonourable. This put him upon the consideration, how far the regal power might extend in supplying the present exigence of his affairs; and in making that dangerous experiment, some obsolete laws and usages were revived, which were looked upon by his subjects as arbitrary stretches, and helped to foment and heighten their discontents. It is not my business to determine of these actions one way or other; but this I will say freely, that his ministers, not himself, were accountable for them; and had he been pleased

to leave them to answer at their peril for the counsels they gave him, all the world must have acquitted his Majesty from any thing unjustifiable on his part.

Indeed Archbishop Laud gives so eminent a testimony to this prince's moderation, as makes it reasonable to believe, it was not in his nature to fly to extremities: for upon occasion of the Lord Strafford's fatal end, giving short character of his person, he has these remarkable words: that "it was his misfortune to serve a good and a gracious prince, who neither knew how to be, nor to be made, great." This, considering the figure Archbishop Laud made at the Council-board, and in the Star-chamber, was a truth spoken at his own expence, and will stand an unquestionable evidence, that violent counsels provoked and raised that opposition to the royal authority, which the mild and well-tempered prince, following his own inclination, would never have brought upon himself.

But, in the second place, a kingdom is then divided against itself when the people are broken into parties and factions: and this is done either upon the score of secular interest, or upon the account, and under pretences at least, of religion. The former of these I shall forbear to make any further enquiry into, that

I may have leave to insist longer, and a little more particularly, on the latter: for to one who had not learned it either from reading or experience, it would appear the strangest and most incredible thing in the world, that religion in general, or the Christian religion in particular, should ever come to be the cause of civil dissensions; for what is there in the belief of a supreme Being, and in the notion of a life to come, wherein the merits and demerits of this will be judged of, that has the least tendency to imbitter our spirits, or disturb the peace of mankind? And wherein does the Christian institution weaken any of those obligations that natural religion lays upon men to be helpful to and to love each other? Certainly in no respect: the case is so far otherwise, that the Gospel breathes nothing but amity and condescension; and Providence was graciously pleased to make way for its reception in general by that peaceable temper and disposition that prevailed over the universe under the empire of Augustus; and particularly in Judea, by the preaching of St. John, who, in the spirit and power of Elias, was to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

Our blessed Lord designed the sunshine of his Gospel not to dazzle men's understandings,

but enlighten them; and therefore he does not break in upon them all at once, but gradually prepares their minds by the doctrine of repentance, instructs them in the rules of virtue and honesty, and the method of calming and subduing their passions: and when this is done, and the soil well prepared, he then thinks fit to sow the seed of his heavenly doctrine, and opens more largely to them the treasures of eternal truth. And of all those good qualities that are previously requisite to this, none are more so than a gentle and peaceable disposition. The great design of Christ's incarnation was to pacify his Father's wrath towards us: and, in order to this, how patiently did he bear all the indignities and affronts that human malice or ignorance could throw upon him! how lowly did he condescend to inform our understandings, and how importunately did he struggle with the perverseness of our nature! Nothing could lessen the ardency of his affection, no injuries could abate or divert his love; and, to manifest the sincerity and strength of it, he has loved us to the end. And now, after all this, what does the Lord require of us? The sum total is comprised in a few words; to do as we would be done by; to love one another as he has loved us; for herein St. Paul assures us the whole Christian law consists. And now

as Naaman's servants said to him, "If the prophet had bade us do some great thing, would we not have done it?" how much rather when he only says, "Love one another," comply with the genuine dictates of good nature, and therein you pay a full obedience to my commands, and entitle yourselves to all those rewards that attend it? One would expect, after this, that the only strife and contention among men would be, who should be first in doing any office of kindness or charity to his brother; who should bear most with his weakness and infirmities, take most pains to inform his understanding, and expect with greatest patience the effect and fruit of his labour. This, I say, is the idea one would look for: but this is so far from being the case in fact, that he who reads the doctrine of Christ, and at the same time considers the practices of most who go under the denomination of Christian, would be almost tempted to believe, that this Prince of Peace, who gave such admirable directions for stifling all revenge and private grudges, did it only that he might reserve the malice and ill-nature of his proselytes for his own service: for if any person injures me in the spitefullest manner, and in the tenderest concern I can possibly have, if he endeavours to take away my life, or (which is dearer to an

honest man) my reputation, I must not have recourse to justice from a principle of revenge, nor indulge any resentment against him in prejudice to the rules of charity. If he hungers, I must give him meat; if he thirsts, I must give him drink; give it freely, give it with a good will: and if one small single act of cruelty would raise me to the highest pitch of happiness in the world, I am at my peril forbidden to do it. I must not dare to gratify my passion; and yet, when the interest of religion comes in competition, I may loose the reins, and give it full scope; become savage and brutal; and then all the extravagance and intemperance I can be guilty of, shall be sanctified under the name of zeal for the Lord. Blessed God! that men should ever pretend to propagate the Gospel of love by outrage, or consecrate the most devilish of their passions to thy service! But so it is; and history scarce relates any eminent piece of villany, such as might seem to go beyond the extent of human malice, where the cause has not impiously been made God's, and he himself called in to patronize it.

Let us therefore (which is my second particular) consider, from what causes this may proceed: and of many that might be instanced in, I will mention four, which are the chief, and the rest but inferior and subordinate to

them. The first and principal is pride. We are so very fond of our own notions, that we cannot bear contradiction, or suffer them to be called in question: we impose our thoughts as the rule and standard of truth; whoever dissents from them, reproaches our understandings; we presently conclude he thinks himself wiser than us; and this raises resentments, that have too often discovered themselves in the most violent and dreadful effects. But this is a cause not only of all religious, but almost all civil, quarrels that have been in the world; and therefore I shall dismiss it, as being sufficiently obvious and too general, and pass over it with only this remark, that as it first made devils, so it is of all others the vice that brings us nearest to their resemblance.

A second cause is, that the generality of people imagine they cannot be too eager in asserting and propagating such opinions as they think necessary. This is a case wherein they will not be persuaded it is possible to be guilty of excess. They make the cause to be God's, and then temper and moderation are esteemed lukewarmness: he is the bravest man that lays most about him; and if he can get above the consideration of friendship and relation, of tenderness and compassion, he is in the ready way to gain the reputation of an hero, to

be esteemed a champion for truth; and we suffer at his hands with this provoking circumstance, that whilst he treats our bodies with all imaginable inhumanity, we must look upon it as the effect of his love, and a tender regard for the welfare of our souls. This course the unconverted Saul took; was indefatigable in hunting after those heretics called Christians; wherever he met with them he seized and bound them, carried them to Jerusalem in order to further prosecution, breathed forth nothing but threatenings and slaughter against them, thought himself happy when he could have his hand in their execution, and in all this we have his own testimony that he thought he did God good service. To set before your eyes the plots that have been laid without effect, and the frauds and treacheries that have in all ages attended the propagation of the Romish doctrines, would only be to represent a horrid scene of things with which this nation has been too well acquainted, of which there are none of us who have not read and seen, and it is not their fault we have not felt our share. We must, however, by no means forget the part they had in this day's tragedy. At Rome the fatal stroke was determined; her votaries have often been told so, and, when the testimonies were fresh, defied to contradict it; and had it not been for

their contrivances abroad and at home, notwithstanding the folly, and madness, and villany of others, that sacred head had never stooped to a block.

And now if you ask, what can make men thus divest themselves of all humanity, or what extraordinary end they drive at that can justify such methods in the attainment of it; they will tell you, if you please to take their words, that the Christian principles inspire these practices, and that the welfare of mankind is their ultimate aim.

A third reason why differences in religion create civil dissentions, and are almost constantly attended with breach of charity, is, that people esteem those to be deserted of God who cannot discern what they take to be a truth of absolute importance. When they have once entertained this conceit of them, they think they may treat them as they please. Then the Anabaptist doctrine comes in play, that dominion is founded in grace, and that the Canaanites are to be utterly destroyed, that the faithful may inherit the land. Then the Sambenists are put on by the inquisition preparatory to the flames. Then the extirpation of heresy commences: the popish bishops are expected to make good that part of the oath, which every one of them takes when he enters

into his office, to persecute heretics to the utmost of his power; and if this be really a Christian and a catholic practice, we must allow them, for these eight or nine hundred years last past, to have had a succession of the most catholic bishops in the whole world.

It is strange to consider whence it can proceed, that people so easily entertain that arrogant imagination of themselves being the peculiar favourites of heaven, when those virtues and graces upon which so glorious a character can be raised are seldom if ever to be observed in them by lookers on. If we enquire after purity and innocency of life, sincerity of conversation, piety towards God, and charity towards mankind, they are endowments which, God knows, too many are only acquainted with the names of: and even the best of men who have them in the most exalted degree are known to us chiefly by their humility, and the little, very little, that they assume to themselves. But what can it be that gives people such assurance of their title to heaven, when the tenor of their lives has so little tendency that way? what can induce them to think they are advancing, with all their weaknesses and follies about them, towards a state of eternal happiness, and at the same time shamefully to pronounce, that a man of probity and virtue, dif-

fering from them in opinion, is in the road to perdition? It is, in short, a mistaken, groundless, and pernicious notion of faith. A fond belief they have entertained, that assenting to a certain set of propositions, and espousing them as truths undeniably revealed, would excuse their failures in practice, or at least help to atone for them upon very easy terms; as if God was obliged to them for asserting his veracity, and giving credit to such things as he in his wisdom has thought fit to make known. This was the avowed faith of the ancient Gnostics; this in later days has been the principle of the Solifidians; and little less than this is the doctrine of the Church of Rome: for if any man professes to believe as the Church believes, though he can give no explicit account of what he calls his faith, and takes care to secure the absolution of a priest before his death, he is thereupon consigned to purgatory, and is promised assured redemption from thence by the prayers and merits of the Church.

The fourth and last cause, why differences in religion divide us also in our affections and civil interests, is, because there never was or ever will be wanting wicked and designing men to foment them, who watch for and lay hold on every opportunity of making tools of

the zealots on both sides: and would to God we of this island had not too much experience of this truth, in the many instances of popish emissaries, who since the Reformation have slily crept in among the dissenters of all denominations, and under the guise of zeal for their opinions and peculiar doctrines, have taken occasion to heat their spirits, to heighten their disgusts, to set the parties one against the other, and all against the Established Church, and to raise our animosities to such a degree, that nothing but the good providence of God seems sufficient to preserve us against the worst effects of our own intestine divisions; though we had no apprehensions from abroad, from an enemy whom God only knows whether our united strength may not prove too weak to grapple with.

Thus far have we considered the divisions of a nation, and have enquired into some of the principal causes that make religion in particular the occasion of them; but they are the most unreasonable, the most unchristian, and the most impolitic that can be; for why in a contention for truth should charity be lost? why should those common duties be neglected, which we have a natural right to, and from the performance whereof we can be absolved upon no account whatsoever? But there is a

question yet more difficult to answer; why, because we differ in our notions concerning the ways and means of attaining future happiness, should we hazard, nay destroy, our enjoyment of the present? If a man is ignorant, I ought to instruct him, with his good leave; if he is in error, I must endeavour to rectify him; if he proves perverse, I am to pity and pray for him; and if he will tread in a dangerous path, he must not wonder he has not my company. But why should this hinder our mutual concurrence to those ends in which we still agree? We both are members of the same body politic, both own a zeal for its support and interest, and both pretend to centre in the public good; but when it comes to practice, we draw different ways, and then it plainly appears that the kingdom is divided against itself: this is a sad reflection, and is aggravated to the last degree, when we consider the event foretold in the text, that a kingdom so divided cannot stand.

The proof of this is my third particular; but I have not time to enlarge upon it, nor indeed is it necessary. It is a political maxim, our blessed Lord has authorized it, and it is in itself so very evident, that nothing can be said to add light or strength to it. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, undoubt-

edly; for what should it stand upon? strength is its basis, and policy its support; but how are these to be had where neither hands nor heads are united? where one man sees his country in danger, and sullenly sits still because another stretches out his arm to defend it: where a reasonable proposition is by one rejected, for no other cause but that another proposes it, and he had rather the nation should lose the benefit, than his antagonist have the credit of conferring it. Nay, (which is yet worse,) in such a state as this, all the foundations of the earth, as the Psalmist expresses it, are out of course. The administration of justice will be interrupted, if not perverted; sometimes there will be no heart, and at others not sufficient power to execute it. Impartiality, and temper, and moderation, will be reputed crimes: personal merit will be overlooked, and every man regarded, not as he is in himself, but as he wears the body of this or that party. When this is the case, what can hinder but that the constitution at length must sink, under either a prevailing faction within itself, or tamely submit to a foreign power, that shall take the advantage of her divisions to invade her. And to make this the more inevitable, there still remains the most dreadful consider-

ation behind; and that is, that people by their mutual animosities take the most effectual course to provoke God to withdraw from them his grace, and the protection of his providence; neither of which have they encouragement to hope for, longer than they continue in charity among themselves: and whenever God withdraws his grace, men not only lie open to the assaults of their enemies, but he sets them loose one against another. So soon as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, passions and lusts usurp its place; covetousness, and pride, and malice, and revenge, sway in men's hearts without control; all their thoughts sordidly terminate in themselves, and they pursue their own desires without further consideration, than the tendency that pursuit may have to promote their private pleasure and advantage. Besides this, they lose the support of that constancy and courage, which always accompanies a quiet conscience; they fear where no fear is; all their firmness of mind forsakes them; all the succours that reason affords are betrayed: like the Philistines, when Jonathan encountered them, they not only destroy each other, they know not why, but there is trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people; even the garrison and the spoilers, they also

tremble; all hearts fail when God forsakes a people; they constantly bear their own terrors about them, and their lusts and passions, for whose sake they first irritated the Almighty, become the executioners of his vengeance upon them.

To conclude, therefore, in a word of application to ourselves. Since divisions in a kingdom are of such fatal consequence, let it be our utmost care to prevent and to compose them. Nothing but these can hinder us from being, with the concurrence of God's ordinary providence, a terror to our enemies and a safeguard to our friends. Not only our religion and liberties, but the whole Protestant interest, lies at stake. The eyes of all the reformed churches are upon us; in us their hopes centre, and with us they expect to stand or fall. What an eternal reproach will it bring upon us, if in such a crisis as this we render ourselves weak and impotent by our intestine feuds and animosities! This will not only expose us to the insults of our adversaries, but make us the proper object of their scorn; and therefore, if all other motives are ineffectual, yet in the name of God let indignation rouse us, and let us never sustain to be the sport of those who have been used to tremble at the English name: let us sincerely lay aside our passions, our pre-

judices, our private separate regards, and let us beseech Almighty God to strengthen our hands, and direct our understandings, that so all our endeavours may tend successfully to his service, and the public security. Amen.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT. NO DATE.

ON ABUNDANCE OF RICHES.

Luke xii. 15.

A MAN'S LIFE CONSISTETH NOT IN THE ABUNDANCE OF THE THINGS THAT HE POSSESSETH.

OUR blessed Lord in the midst of his preaching, whilst he is inculcating his heavenly doctrine, and opening to his hearers the treasures of eternal life, is interrupted by a petition, very unseasonable, and in its nature as opposite as possible to the subject of his discourse. One of the company says unto him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." They could not, it seems, agree about the distribution of their father's substance; one of them, at least, desired more than his proper share; but being inclined to

end their difference in an amicable manner, and both possessed with an high opinion of our Saviour's judgment and impartiality, it is very probable they had agreed to refer the matter to his decision; for both were upon the place, the motion itself implies as much, "Lord, speak to my brother:" he was within hearing, and waiting, we may favourably suppose, with attention and deference, to hear what unerring wisdom and justice would determine. But the blessed Jesus, not well pleased to be called from the most important business of his mission to the low consideration of worldly matters, gives the petitioner a gentle reproof, by asking him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" His province was of an higher and of a very different sort; there were other tribunals to which they might have recourse in affairs of secular interest, and to them the unthinking crowd might perhaps imagine he left them; but it is plain, from what immediately follows, that though he checked them a little for their improper address, yet it was not his intention to dismiss them without such instruction as might sufficiently dispose them to end the controversy betwixt themselves; for he said unto them, (that is, to the two brothers,) "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of

the things that he possesses." As if he had said, in other words, A covetous desire is the cause of this difference betwixt you; a desire of more than you want, of more than the occasions of life call for, nay, perhaps of more than you would use if you had it: make a true and judicious estimate of life, and then you will find that all its real demands lie within a reasonable compass, and enlarging your desires beyond those bounds is more than the support or happiness of it requires.

And this he is pleased further to illustrate by that lively parable of the rich man, whose busy thoughts seem to be wholly taken up in contriving, not how he might apply the plenty God had given him to his present use, but how he might hoard up and reserve it for a series of many years; foolishly indulging his imagination in the prospect of a lazy and voluptuous course, when the very next ensuing night was to be his last. If these brethren were attentive to this, and applied it as they ought, there would be no occasion for them to seek another judge; for when this doctrine had once gained possession of their hearts, neither of them would think he wanted more than his due proportion; and when the inordinate desire was reclaimed, the contention would quickly cease.

Thus we see our Saviour did in reality give

his judgment in the point, though not directly, and in a judicial manner. He does not indeed say, I appoint, I command, or I peremptorily order thus and thus; but he suggests the unreasonableness of carrying their desires beyond the conveniences of life; and, from the uncertainty of life, he infers the folly of doing it; "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesses." Which words, as they have relation to what went before, will bear this easy paraphrase: Whatever we contend and labour for upon earth, is either something to support life, or to make the course of it more agreeable and convenient: but in neither of these cases ought the demands to be extravagant, for abundance is not what either of them want.

That abundance is not requisite to preserve life, is what I suppose every body will readily assent to; for on what part of the world can we turn our eyes, where we do not find the bulk of mankind slenderly provided for? They are far from abounding; yet here it is, even in the lowest rank and order of men, that we see life and health and strength in greatest vigour. But perhaps they are very few who know how to be content with enough, and desire no more than what their occasions ask for. Great and abundant riches are thought

to carry some degrees of felicity along with them above what is to be found in a moderate fortune, and the more they increase, the happier is he thought that has them. It shall therefore be my present business to consider some of those inconveniences that abundance brings along with it, and a few of those inferences that will naturally arise out of them. But before I proceed, I think I ought to explain what I mean by abundance, and by a moderate fortune.

Abundance, which truly answers to the verb περισσεύω in the Greek, signifies superfluity, redundancy, or excess, above the proper measure; so that a man is rightly said to have abundance, who has more than he has use for. A moderate fortune is such as supplies the ends of use and decency, according to the birth, or place, or condition of a person, and is by no means the same and alike to all, but differs as people are distinguished by their circumstances; and every body understands pretty near, though nobody can exactly limit the proportions; but this is evident at first sight, that what would be abundance to one man, may not in reality be enough for another. A mean man has not occasion for so much as one of a superior rank, nor a private man for so much as a magistrate, nor a single man for so much as

one that has a numerous family. Conveniences requisite to the one and to the other are vastly disproportioned both in quality and number; and till all their conveniences are supplied, we do not deny their demands to be moderate. And now let us consider some of those inconveniences that abundance thus understood brings along with it.

And first, the Preacher has taught us, that if goods are increased, so are they that eat them. It is we ourselves that employ art and contrivance, that work up schemes and frame projects on which all our anxious thoughts turn. It is we ourselves that labour and travel, and are eager in the pursuit of riches, carried on with a deceitful imagination, that whatever we can get will be all our own; and when we come to possess them, we discover the cheat, that we have not in truth gained them for ourselves. We then perceive that self, rightly understood, never wanted, nor knows how to use, them: it was vanity or pride, not necessity or convenience, called for them; and accordingly, when they are come, we find that either we give in to a covetous desire of managing them to advantage, and increasing the store, which has sometimes grown upon people to such a degree, as to make them really more indigent than they were before; or else a new labour

comes upon us, in the disposition and expence of what we have, whereby others are indeed the true enjoyers, and we only in imagination. How much care and vexation attends the owner in the decent consumption of a great revenue; and when all is done, what has he for his pains saving the beholding of it with his eyes? What else does the great plenty of his table, the number of his servants, and the splendid appearance they make, amount to? Is it not his dependents and people that are fed and clothed? Has he any more than his share amongst them? Is he nourished by what they eat, or is he warmed by the clothes on their backs? It will easily be confessed, No: but these are marks of distinction, these are means whereby the rich and great are set high at a distance from their neighbours, and made the object of their respect and reverence. But how poor a spirit, and how weak an understanding, must that man have, who is capable of being delighted with bare outward formality! A man may bow very low, and look upon him with a meek submissive air, who at the same time perhaps both hates and despises him; another may address him very decently, and in a form of words full of respect, who would much rather choose to speak satire if he durst: and yet here his riches have spent their strength; their

force and efficacy sinks entirely, nor can they conduct him a step further towards the heart; for inward regard is due only to personal merit, and where we pay honour to outward distinctions, it is always upon presumption that good and noble qualities go along with them. But be that as it will, does the man's life consist in his superfluous expences? Can he draw any reasonable or solid advantage from them above what a vain imagination is touched with? Perhaps it will be answered, Yes, the number of his dependents strengthens his interest, and by the multitude of his people he is better served. But experience confutes this, and teaches us that friends and servants are useful as they are qualified and inclined, not according to their number: it is a proper choice, not bulk, that recommends them; and, generally speaking, that man finds most benefit from them who has fewest of both.

A second inconvenience of abundance is, that it exposes those that have it to temptations; and he understands very little that calls himself a man, and does not dread temptation above all things; he must be foolish and inconsiderate, have no notion of the frailty of human nature, the strength of his passions, the obliquity of his will, and the subtilty wherewith pleasures insinuate themselves, that

can be content to make trial of them where it may be avoided, and choose to gain his knowledge, by an unnecessary and dangerous, if not fatal, experience. And what wickedness or extravagance is there in the world, that abundance does not excite or is subservient to? Who can escape flattery that is able to reward it? And yet how is an excellent nature defaced, and what a pernicious turn do the best qualities take, where flattery gains admission? A just knowledge of a man's self shall hereby be blown up into self-conceit; he shall lose the true measure of his own endowments, and, delighting to see them in the magnitude in which his followers represent them, shall at last come to fancy they really exceed other men's; and this naturally carries him into a contempt of them; he shall be made believe he is the object of every man's love or envy, and his pride receives a pleasure both from the one and the other; he is advised to humour himself, and entertains the hint without reluctancy; he is told every thing is in his power, and hearkens to the suggestion, till he can deny himself nothing; thus his reason is darkened, his faculties are perverted, and his strength is lost, and all owing to the servile addresses and compliances of those, that would never have troubled him in a lower fortune. But without the help

of these vassals, great plenty has of itself sufficient force to make its way to and corrupt our hearts; it needs nobody to tell us that it can bribe and purchase, bring home every thing to us that our fantastical desires are in quest of, and ward off all the dangers that attend irregular pursuits: we find by every day's experience it prevails too effectually both ways; and how strong an incentive is this, to the most inordinate affection! A poor man will suppress an inclination in the birth, that disturbs and solicits and gives no hope; he will not be drawn into a fruitless endeavour, or aim at a gratification, which he wants the necessary means to accomplish. A feeble man will not enter the lists against a strong and skilful adversary, how much soever he may covet the prize; he knows it would be a ridiculous and a vain contention, and therefore he rather turns the attack upon himself, and strives to master a passion, which he cannot humour. This no doubt is an happy necessity, that many are brought under by the mediocrity of their fortunes; they owe their innocency to their circumstances, having those seeds in their hearts, which now lie quiet, and in a manner unperceived; but which plenty and affluence would quickly warm, and bring to spring up and exert themselves; for the call of riches is

to luxury and ease; wherever they go they put the possessor in mind, that he has goods laid up for many years; that he should eat, drink, and be merry; and how small is the number of those that have constancy to withstand the voice of this charmer. He must have a virtue of a very strong complexion, that keeps within the limits of his duty, when he may transgress every way with ease, and has that in his hand which removes all obstructions; and yet this is too much the case of him that abounds: for what villany can his heart suggest to him, which his money will not promise to execute successfully? or what enormities can he think of, which this tempter will not prevail with others to promote? By help of this, the revengeful have sate free from danger, and carried on their bloody designs by mercenary hands; drawing men into their quarrels with more execrable inhumanity, than injuries offered even to themselves would have provoked them to. By help of this, poor deluded wretches have been wrought upon to become, in the fullest import of the words, the slaves of sin, who might otherwise have had strength enough to withstand the force of natural temptation. In short, by help of this, men have been brought to desert truth and honour, to digest the names of false and base, and to seem unconcerned

at the imputation, whilst they could whisper to themselves that their envy, or their hatred, their ambition, pride, or interest, were supported by it.

A third, and that not the least, inconvenience, inseparable almost from a great and plentiful fortune, is, that it deprives the owner of the most wholesome and necessary physic to the mind, reproof and censure. I call it physic, because it seldom goes down without disgust, or operates without occasioning an inward struggle. But that mind must be of an exceeding happy temper that never stands in need of it, and the want of applying it seasonably and properly has had fatal effects. Not that people forbear to descant upon the actions of such as are above them; they are very free in giving their judgments, and where there is room for severity, never fail to give enough of it; but this is always done behind a man's back, and seldom if ever turns to his advantage: for to his face he hears nothing but what is smooth and agreeable; his follies are applauded by some, and overlooked by others, and care is taken that his vices always bear the name of those virtues, that come nearest to them in resemblance. If he is covetous, he hears of it under the name of good management; if prodigal and expensive, generosity is his character;

if he be subject to passion and quick in resentment, it goes for spirit; if he speaks severely, it is wit; if he says nothing, it is wisdom. Thus is he treated by all about him that have ends to serve, and they that love him are forced to lament his false steps in silence: for the tyrant custom has so far prevailed, as to make unacceptable truth a breach of good manners: plain dealing is a vulgar thing, and how prudently and respectfully soever an error or a mistake be touched upon, yet it seldom meets with such acceptance as will encourage the attempt a second time. I doubt not but this in the general opinion passes for one of the great advantages of quality and fortune, and it is thought a fine thing to be above contradiction, blame, or advice; but of how pernicious influence is such a notion, and how far does the malignity of it extend! By this means the passions grow to be ungovernable, and the frailty of human nature becomes incapable of amendment; little errors in life are slipped over and repeated till they get strength and are habitual, and the greater are thought to be no more than what others are subject to, because nobody remarks upon them. The number is but few (especially in younger years and a flowing fortune) of those that naturally are disposed to act with deliberation and caution; generally speaking,

active spirits are hasty and precipitate, take the first hint of a pleasing idea to go into the execution of it, pursue their course as the horse rushes into the battle with a heedless impetuosity, and never stay to reflect what may be the consequence. In such a method of action there must needs be many and gross mistakes; sometimes the end will be ill chosen, and sometimes the manner of arriving at it will be wrong; and what hope is left that men should retrieve their errors, who are never to be put in mind that they are out of the way? "Before I was afflicted," says David, "I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." He was a very wise and a very good man, and applied his heart to the knowledge of the law that was to regulate his actions; but he fell in the way of great temptations, and sometimes presumed upon his superiority and power, and was carried so far by their deceitful insinuations, that admonition and reprehension were too weak to reclaim him. He must it seems smart for his folly before he could be sufficiently sensible of it, and with a generous integrity he owns the necessity of his correction, and does not conceal the good effect. If this excellent prince, so well disposed, so knowing in the law, and so full of sincerity, stood in need of discipline, who shall pretend to be exempt from it? and

if such an one as he was subject to miscarriage, how innumerable and enormous must their deviations be, that will neither admit of direction, nor hear that they do amiss?

A fourth inconvenience of abundance is, that it is a clog upon us, and makes us move on more slowly in the way to a better life. To this purpose I need not observe, that it always makes court to our inclinations and passions, invites to pleasure and vanity, and promises a fuller measure of enjoyment than Solomon's fools ever dreamed of; for people who can hearken to these suggestions are far out of the road, and in danger of losing sight of what is to come. But we may safely understand the proposition in a sense as general and unlimited as is possible: that wherever abundance is, though in the possession of a good, a virtuous, and a religious man, even there it will be found an impediment, and he will perceive it constantly pressing in and usurping much of the time, wherein his thoughts might be more usefully employed. A competency only is not to be managed as it ought without care and application; more than a Christian would choose to bestow upon it, if the condition of this life did not make it necessary; and where a surplusage arises, the labour grows in proportion, and brings this anxious reflection along with it, that

rightly to dispose of it is very difficult, to do otherwise is criminal. Our Saviour commands, to draw the cares of this world into as narrow a compass as is possible. He tells us, that in an heart where they have too much room, the good seed is sown to no purpose; it falls amongst thorns, that spring up and choke it. He puts his disciples in mind, that it was a degree of infidelity to be anxious even for the necessaries of life. "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek;" the Gentiles, who are without God in the world, whereof some absolutely deny his providence, and none conceive aright of it; the Gentiles, who seek for happiness in this life, and either have none, or very obscure, imperfect, and unsatisfactory notions of the future; they seek, they labour after these things: "but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" make it your chief business to be rightly instructed in my doctrine, and to be conformable to that rule; "and then all these things shall be added unto you." Providence in blessing your ordinary endeavours will see you provided with such things as are convenient, or at least necessary, to a present subsistence. When Martha was busy in preparing a decent supper for our Lord, one would

imagine she had been employed not only in a commendable but a meritorious service; and it was no small disappointment to her, that upon her complaint, her sister was not dismissed to her assistance with reproof. She expected the blessed Jesus should have told Mary, that the burden of the family was not to rest upon her sister alone; that domestic business must be done, and therefore it was fit they should bear an equal part in the dispatch of it; that then both of them would be at leisure to attend his preaching without interruption. Something of this nature it is plain she expected; but we hear nothing like it from his lips. On the other side, he gives Martha to understand, that her business was an incumbrance, a present diversion at least from that which should always be her chief concern; and she must know Mary did very wisely in postponing all other cares to that. Whence is it that our Saviour is thus solicitous to draw all our thoughts from inferior objects, but that he knows the Christian life to have need of them all? To walk uprightly, and to be useful in the world, (for our great Master has taught us no other way to heaven,) require such a latitude of knowledge, so true a judgment, and so great integrity, as are never to be arrived at by those who can think on them only by fits, and afford them no

more than a few transient reflections. Cases are intricate, and must be studied throughly, or a good intention will often fail in carrying us to a right determination concerning them. Appearances will deceive us, and we shall frequently judge amiss where the will is by no means ill inclined. We shall purpose to do good offices, and then mistake in the application; where we do well it will be owing more to chance than design; and for the innumerable errors we shall be guilty of, no other refuge will be left us but that poor excuse, which an ingenuous man would be ashamed to plead, that we fell into them through ignorance or inadvertency. The Psalmist informs us, that God's law was his meditation day and night; that he had set his heart upon it, and delighted in it above all things; and he knew very well that nothing less could have brought him to understand and practise it as became him. This is so plain as to admit no further evidence. There is not a mechanic art so low, or of so narrow a compass, but that considerable time must be spent before the artificer can pretend to have attained to any competent degree of skill in it; and as Christianity is a business of the largest compass, for it undertakes to regulate our thoughts, words, and actions; so it has the most stubborn materials to work upon,

unreasonable appetites, violent passions, and a perverse will; which are not to be brought into a right temper but by long and diligent and dextrous management; nor to be kept in it but by a watchful uninterrupted care.

I shall not proceed to instance in any more of the many inconveniences abundance is attended with, but beg leave to draw an inference or two from those I have already mentioned. The first I shall make is, that if what is superfluous above a man's reasonable occasions cannot in truth be spent upon himself, he is destitute of common prudence, as well as wanting in his duty, if he does not seriously consider how it may be applied to the best use; something must be done with it, and he must be accountable for it. Perhaps he will acknowledge this, and say it does not want a place in his thoughts; that he designs something considerable, such as may be a lasting benefit to posterity, but is not fixed in his resolution as to the manner of applying it; that will require much and serious consideration, but his breast is labouring for the public good, and the world will see and feel it when he dies. It is pity he cannot come to a resolution sooner, and be advised rather to help those that are in need at present, rather than contrive for the ease and convenience of such as are yet unborn; for

men may have many motives to these projects that will never suffer them to come into the account of their charities. But let him take his own way, and let his intention be pious and sincere; for it becomes us to make allowances as far as we can, rather than discourage a generous or a charitable work. But is he sure it will answer his end when the execution falls into other hands? Have we never heard of embezzlements and misapplication in such cases? I wish we had not. But be it likewise admitted, that what he designs will be faithfully executed. There is yet another question that more nearly concerns him: is he sure that God will accept it at his hands, and own himself at the great day to have been fed and clothed and succoured by him? Can he be said to give what was not his own? or can that be called his own where his property in it was at an end? His riches must have fallen into other hands, though he had made no disposition of them; he could not carry them to the grave; and the sum total of his charity amounts but to this, let the poor take them, since I am taken from them. Could he have been prevailed upon to dispose of them in his lifetime, it would have been his own proper act and deed; his own eyes might have seen the well-ordering and good effect of it, and his heart might have

been warmed with that lively comfort, which results more sensibly from this than from the practice of any other Christian duty: especially if he had turned his cares towards the necessities of his poor neighbours, and helped to lighten their present miseries: he could not then have seen the dejected countenance of one, whom he had seasonably succoured, clear up, without feeling his own soul refreshed; and when he had considered that a whole family often shared in, and was supported by, that single bounty, how much must his satisfaction have been enlarged: he could not have delivered a prisoner from restraint, and not found himself more at ease: he could not have contributed towards the education and instruction of poor children, without the pleasure of reflecting, that he took the likeliest course to give so many useful members to his church and to his country; in short, he could not have done any sort of good office to those about him, that would not have been repaid with interest in the complacency of his own mind. These unspeakable pleasures he has lost, by setting his charity far off, to commence when he himself shall be no more; and if he meets with the reward of it hereafter, (as it becomes us to hope he may,) yet it must be allowed he has not taken the most effectual method to secure it.

A second inference I shall make is, that if abundant riches bring temptations in their company, they that have them can never be upon too strict a guard. They should always have a suspicious and jealous eye towards an enemy, that watches all opportunities to attack them, that is false and treacherous, and advances towards them under the guise of a friend. If such an one gets within them they are lost, and the force to resist will dwindle to nothing. Their constancy will forsake them, and their inclinations will not long parley before they surrender themselves: there may be some little struggle, but, generally speaking, it has proved faint and fruitless; and there are many instances of it in Scripture history. A man may at present be in great repose, and feel no disturbance from irregular desires; but a strong temptation may surprise him, and raise a storm in his breast, which his reason cannot lay.

St. James advises to resist the devil, and he will fly from us: let us but keep our ground, and we are safe: but our best security against temptations is to fly from them. Who could imagine that two of Jacob's sons were capable of being possessed with such a diabolical resentment, as ended in the slaughter of Hamor, his family, and city? Who could suspect that David would ever have been guilty of such

miscarriages as are recorded of him? and with what amazement do we read, that St. Peter denied his Master, and stood it out with oaths and imprecations? He had given many proofs of his zeal, his courage, and affection to his service; his whole life afterwards eminently shewed them: but these things are written for our admonition, that he that standeth, may take heed lest he fall. We can never be too careful, nor too well fortified, against a trial, how weak soever it may appear, and how much soever we may fancy ourselves superior to it. Confidence is often fatal, and we know not where the hidden strength of a temptation lies, or how many avenues it may find to our hearts.

A third and the last inference I shall make is, that if riches obstruct our progress towards another life, we are inexcusable if we do not make haste to get loose from them. For what is it they offer? can they give pleasure, honour, or power? in no degree to what they pretend: can they give ease, health, and strength? can they deliver from sickness or pain? can they rescue from death and the grave? nay, can they give security and perpetuity to the enjoyments of this world? if they could, it is much to be feared too many of the rich would think themselves completely happy, and yet how short would this fall of a Chris-

tian's hope! But they have none of these powers; they cannot exempt a single mortal from any one of the whole catalogue of miseries to which this life is subjected. They cannot add a moment to the length of his days, nor, when troubles invade him, assuage the sorrow of his heart. They can do nothing but impose upon and abuse him, and are only true in this, that they never pretended to go beyond the body, or to have any influence upon a right mind; and yet that is our immortal part, and has pleasures prepared for it, suitable to its nature, which can no other way be arrived at, but by improving our understandings, by getting the dominion over our passions, by the exercise of love in the most extensive manner, in short, by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; that when we come to take a final leave of it, we may depart willingly and cheerfully, in a well grounded assurance of rising to a glorious and endless state.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT. NO DATE.

ON SPIRITUAL VANITY.

MATT. xix. 20.

THE YOUNG MAN SAITH UNTO HIM, ALL THESE THINGS HAVE I KEPT FROM MY YOUTH UP: WHAT LACK I YET?

THE relation of this young man's address to our Saviour we find in three of the four Evangelists; and it is so very remarkable, that we may reasonably be allowed to dwell a little upon it, before we come to consider the words I have now read. For we have here a person that presents himself to Christ with a petition, that he would direct him in the ways of eternal life: and of all the disciples that ever approached him upon that account, none seem to have made greater progress beforehand, or

to have been better prepared to obey the most difficult instructions: for our Lord bids him keep the commandments, and he answers readily, he had done it from his youth; they are enumerated to him in particular, and without exception he answers to all. Who can consider his circumstances, and not wonder at his reply? St. Mark observes, that thereupon Jesus looked upon him, (as it were with admiration,) and loved him: and indeed one cannot easily conceive where he should meet with a more proper object of his love; he had applied himself early to the study and practice of religion, being then young. St. Luke says he was a ruler, and all observe that he was very rich; so he had youth and plenty, quality and authority, every thing that might give strength to the temptations of the world; and they constantly lay within his reach; yet in spite of them he preserves his innocency in the most untractable, inconsiderate part of life, discharges his duty faithfully towards God and his neighbour, and desires still to go on to greater degrees of perfection. But here he was ignorant of his own strength, and was not aware that it would fail him. He had hitherto enjoyed the ease and conveniences of life in an unblameable manner, and little thought he should be ordered to dismiss them all at once.

He knew the daily miseries to which poverty is exposed; he had experience of the many advantages he derived from the benefit of his estate; he could not apprehend but it might be lawful for him to keep and use it within the rules of sobriety and temperance; and therefore, being shocked with the unexpected command, and not sufficiently disposed to yield obedience to it, he went away sorrowful.

What pity was it that he went! Methinks he deserves, notwithstanding, that we should judge as favourably of him as the history will allow, for his case is very singular. He was arrived to a pitch of piety and virtue far above the common standard; in the midst of all his affluence, his thoughts were employed in the pursuit of another life; and when he asked our Saviour's instructions towards the attainment of it, could he but have rested at the first question, that gracious Master, who knew his heart, had given him an answer accordingly, and spared him the difficult and unequal trial; but when he proceeded to ask, What lack I yet? he discovered a spiritual vanity, which Christ thought fit to correct. It looked as if he had a mind to distinguish himself, and pretended to outdo the common measures of duty; and then it was fit to shew him his weak side, and

check his presumption with that advice which he could not digest; "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." He was not wanting either in the disposition or exercise of charity, if his reply to Christ was sincere, but entirely to divest himself of all that he had, to supply the necessities of others, was a degree to which his faith was not strong enough to carry him. Yet even here he preserved his good disposition: he does not argue against the difficulty of the thing, he does not offer to dispute how far it was reasonable, but not being able to bring himself to a ready compliance, he goes away, but goes sorrowful; troubled that he should stick at any thing, and inclined, we may hope, rather to deliberate upon, than obstinately to refuse, his obedience: he had great possessions, and they had gained a greater place in his heart than he imagined.

I presume it will not be thought I have said too much to extenuate the crime of this young man's reluctancy, when we remember that his case has still a melancholy side. We do not know what his determination was at last; we hear no more of him amongst our Saviour's disciples; and his going away gave occasion to that remark upon the extreme difficulties they labour under, who, being possessed of riches

and the advantages of this world, endeavour to enter upon the Christian life, and entitle themselves to future happiness.

But, to say no more of the person and his character, let us come to the consideration of his words in the text; "All these things have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet?" Here we find, first, a very round assertion, that he had kept all the commandments of God from his youth up, that is, from his infancy, for he was young now; and we must understand him to mean either from the time of his first instruction, or, at least, from the time that he arrived at any exercise of reason, and was capable of obeying upon proper inducements. Secondly, that he was ambitious to go farther; desired to know whether nothing was to be done beyond what was positively enjoined; and, with a sort of impatience, asks, "What lack I yet?" And hence we may raise three observations: first, that in matters of religion people generally are tempted to have a very good opinion of their own performances; secondly, that in all ages and places of the world, men of devout tempers have still been inquisitive after rules of perfection; but, thirdly, that a man treads safest in the plain beaten paths of his duty, and never is secure when he attempts to go beyond them.

And first, I say, in matters of religion people generally are tempted to have a very good opinion of their own performances. And this appears, in fact, from the instance before us. The young man, no doubt, had lived very regularly, and with a constant eye to his duty; he must have been sincere in his obedience to the law, or, in affirming that he was so, he had been unpardonable: Jesus, instead of loving, must have had an aversion to him; as Jacob observed to Rebecca, his father would have discovered him, he would have seemed to him a deceiver, and brought upon himself a curse and not a blessing. But this could not justify the saying what never man before him presumed to say of himself. In so difficult a course to have made no false steps, is inconsistent with the frailty and imperfection of human nature; and when our Saviour reproved him for giving even to him the epithet of *good*, one would think he might have learned to speak afterwards of himself with more humility. But the fault is natural, and grace only can correct it. A man must sequester himself from conversation, that does not think he can make a tolerable figure in it; he must be persuaded either that he has no great imperfection, or that he can cover it—or that if he is below others in one instance, he excels them as much in another—before he will

venture himself into company. Not that men judge rightly upon these occasions, but we are sure they must judge in this manner, or they would be deserted of themselves; their spirits would sink, their hearts would fail them, and they would go abroad with more reluctancy than a slave to the gallies; there being no pain to the mind like that of being exposed, nor has human nature strength enough to bear the thought of contemptible. So in the case of religion, the commerce that is kept up betwixt God and man, every body that approaches him does and must do it with an hope that he shall appear not altogether an unworthy object: if he has been guilty of errors and follies, he thinks he may plead excuse from natural infirmities, or he fancies he has virtues to overbalance them; if his stubborn inclination will not yield to the rule, he learns to distinguish himself out of his duty, discovers his case to be particular, and that abatements and allowances are to be made to him, which others have not the same pretence to; or, if this will not do, he sets himself to interpret the law, till, as our Saviour told the Pharisees of old, by comments and false glosses he has brought it to be of none effect.

This, I say, in some instance or other, is the case even of the very worst men; so long as

they retain any sense of religion, they flatter and cheat themselves, by carrying their virtues before, and their vices behind them; or they frame to themselves absurd notions of God and his will, and pervert the whole economy of the Gospel; but none comes knowingly and wilfully to reject the laws, without pretence and without excuse, till he is ready to defy the legislature. This must be the result of downright atheism, not only practical but speculative; and history does not afford us an instance of a man so hardy, as to live in a professed opposition to the will of God, whilst he owned his being and his providence: the consequence of this must soon be despair; the horrors of eternal vengeance would invade his guilty soul, and he would become odious and insupportable to himself. But whilst men can delude themselves with false notions, or invent any tolerable colour for their actions, they are able to do what the considering part of the world cannot see but with amazement; they can present themselves before God as his servants, whilst they are altogether employed under the powers of darkness.

But as we have on this hand men whose religion is vain, men who profess themselves devoted to God, but appear very backward and inexperienced in his service; so there are

religious of another sort, who are for outrunning the rest of mankind, and always enquiring after rules of perfection. This is the second observation, and every age and place of the world affords instances of it. Superstitious rites and concealed mysteries were of such reputation amongst the heathens of old, that none were esteemed friends and favourites of their gods but such as were initiated into them: others might attend the prayers and daily sacrifices as much as they pleased, and carefully endeavour to live without offence, and do good offices amongst their neighbours; yet this would not hinder but that when those mystical ceremonies were entered upon, they were driven away as profane; not only as unworthy to see or hear, but their presence was thought to pollute and diminish the efficacy of the sacred rite. How early in the Christian Church did people begin, as they called it, to forsake the world, and withdraw themselves from a sociable life, imagining they might advance to degrees of perfection in solitude and contemplation, which were not to be arrived at by conversing with mankind in a practical life: and when their numbers came to increase, and they formed themselves into fraternities and societies, then their rules of living must be derived to them from above, the

colour, shape, and substance of their garments, the very cut of their hairs, every thing that they did or that belonged to them, must have something sacred in it; till at last they came to appropriate the name of religious to themselves, and looked down upon the rest of mankind as in a distinct and dangerous state. There was little hope of their salvation, if they did not entitle themselves to a share in the merits of the religious; and it was no small security after death to be buried in one of their habits. Nay, so far have the mystical divines of the Church of Rome carried this notion, that they teach their disciples not only to withdraw from the affairs and business of a sociable life, but even from sense and reason; the very attendance upon the prayers, and sacraments, and ordinances of the Church being in their opinion a low dispensation, in comparison of the divine contemplative state, where the soul aspires to its utmost elevation, to an union of itself with the divine nature. For in order to this, not only the objects of sense must be removed, but the very use and exercise of the discussive faculty; the soul must be in a state of rest and acquiescence, entirely passive, before it can be capable of the mighty blessing which we are sure after all they know nothing of, because they know not how to speak in-

telligibly upon the subject. But this is a sort of madness which has been very useful to them; they have found their account in it several ways, and therefore it is no wonder that they encourage and cultivate it.

But if we enquire now, what should be the reason that in all times and amongst all religions some should be found who have still been ready to set up ways and methods of their own, as perfective of those that were known and prescribed, we shall find pride to be the root from whence it springs. This passion meets with matter to work upon, and support itself, in every business and state of life; it first discovered itself in heaven, and therefore we cannot be surprised if we find it even in the ways that lead thither; it suggests that it is mean to be undistinguished, it reflects upon the words common and ordinary with disgust, insinuates to the aspiring soul that it ought to be a favourite, and must therefore attempt to please God in a more refined way, or more eminent degree, than others have learned to do: and that which gives it the mighty advantage where it mixes with a devout temper is, that it never meets with mortification. He that is proud in other respects, is opposed by some and scorned by others; is hated of God, and not at all times satisfied

with himself: but pride, under the shelter of sanctity and devotion, is secure; the people stand at a distance, and look upon such an one with veneration; they take him to be something more than man, they applaud and admire him, and he receives the incense as his due, thinks himself equally approved of God, and is highly pleased and delighted with himself. Peevishness and censoriousness have been observed to be qualities almost inseparable from this sort of people; and amongst the heathens at this day, their insolence we are told is intolerable. How much more agreeable were it to the Christian character, that men should be humble, and meek, and diffident of themselves! Nay, how much more agreeable were it to reason and the nature of things, that men, who consider the immense excellency of the divine nature, and the low, dependent, and imperfect condition of their own, should endeavour to obey God according to what they are able to discover of his will, should endeavour to make their approaches towards him with the utmost care and circumspection, and in such way and manner as he has been pleased to direct! for the third observation tells us, that a man treads safest in the plain beaten paths of his duty, and never is secure when he attempts to go beyond them; and that for these two rea-

sons, first, because he may depend upon God's guidance and protection, and secondly, because he is sure they will conduct him to the right end of his journey.

And first, I say, a man treads safest in the plain beaten paths of his duty, because he may depend upon God's guidance and protection; for they are marked out to him by his order, they are the genuine dictates of reason engraved upon the heart, and confirmed and ratified in all the public and solemn declarations of his will. And he has obliged himself to assist and strengthen all that travel in this way, with assurance that they shall never sink under the discouragements of their own natural weakness and inability. Errors may misguide, and passions and affections may call us aside or retard our progress; but whilst sincerity and honest inclinations bear us company, our wanderings will not be long or dangerous; "for he is faithful that hath promised, and we can do all things through him that strengthens us." But if we give ourselves up to follow the mazes of a warm imagination, it is impossible to say whither they may carry us, for we have lost our guide and our directions; neither the word nor our own reason goes before us, nor have we any assurance that the Holy Spirit will be with us. It has pleased God so to order

this mortal state, that nobody can subsist tolerably in it of himself; neither his mind nor his body can be easy; neither the conveniences of life or security from danger are to be obtained, but by entering into society. But because this is the condition of humanity, he has made it our duty to provide against the infirmities of it, by obliging us to have a tender regard to the welfare and happiness of others, and to relieve their necessities, of what nature soever they be, when it comes within our power. The whole tenor of the Gospel is to this purpose, all the Commandments end in this, that we love our neighbour, love him sincerely, love him as ourselves, and in doing this the whole law is fulfilled. But as the Jews avoided the highest obligation of natural justice and gratitude, (that of relieving their indigent parents,) by pretending that their substance was dedicated to a religious use; so these religious I mentioned before excuse themselves from bearing a part in the cares and troubles of an active life, by pretending that they have divested themselves of all worldly concerns by a vow of poverty, and are more serviceable to the public by their prayers and austerities, than princes, governors, or judges, in the protection of their people, or administration of justice. The arrogance of this pretence suf-

ficiently shews from what spirit it proceeds; and people had need be better satisfied how they spend their time, before they depend upon their merits.

But not to proceed in this enquiry, we may rather desire to be informed by them, who has required this at their hands? what warrant have they from Scripture or reason to part with what they have, or rather to exempt themselves from those pains and cares whereby an honest livelihood might be obtained, that they may be a burden to the state, and live upon the labours of other men? They must not, indeed they do not, pretend, that they are a part of that body of men who are set aside to minister in holy things; they claim a much higher character, and stand upon a very different foot; they are in a state of more perfection, which they will have to be recommended by our Saviour in all those passages of Scripture where he speaks favourably of the poor, but especially in this reply of his to the young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." But to shew how little service this will do them, we may take notice, first, that this is only an advice, not a command; it is not positively enjoined, but offered upon the supposition of his eager desire to go the utmost length of a

disciple. Secondly, that even as a counsel it is not general, to be drawn afterwards into example, but only particular, to that young man, or at most to that season of our Saviour's preaching and continuance upon earth; "if thou wilt be perfect," that is, if thou wilt entirely give thyself up to follow me and my doctrine, if thou wilt be my disciple without reserve, make it appear to me in thy faith and obedience, "go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," and then come and depend upon me and my power for thy daily support. This seems to be the genuine and full import of the words; for that they cannot extend to all in general, even as counsel and advice, is undeniable, and that for this plain reason, because it is absolutely impracticable. That cannot be fit advice to all, which it is not fit for all to follow; but this is a thing that all cannot do, for if all must sell and give, who shall be the receivers? or if riches be so extremely dangerous, where is the charity in offering the temptation? But it might be fit for those whom the Son of God chose to be his more immediate disciples to do what might not be expected from followers of a lower rank; and when it was his pleasure to divulge his heavenly doctrine, none could carry it abroad with so much force, as they who evidenced

their sincerity by forsaking all other business to attend it, and their faith by relying entirely upon the divine Providence for their subsistence.

The second reason why a man treads safest in the plain known path of his duty is, because he is sure it will conduct him to the right end of his journey. Uncertain and untried means will have uncertain and unexpected events; and people who do not rightly know what they undertake, may perish, when they only intend to give a proof of their strength. The prophet Jeremiah observes, that "the heart is deceitful above all things;" and no man knows his own, that has not examined and tried it thoroughly. Courage and firmness of mind are noble qualities, but a man can never be sure he has them till he has had some occasion to make use of them; and when that time comes, he may with grief and shame discern they were not half so considerable in themselves as in his imagination. St. Peter was very confident of his fidelity to his Master, and was sure, whatever others might do, that he was not capable of disowning the relation; but when the trial came, his constancy forsook him; with oaths and imprecations he denied the Lord of life, and discovered a weakness, which before that he was not to be persuaded had been in his

nature. So little do men know the temper of their own minds, and so little are they able to judge what will be the event, when they come to undergo any dangerous trial. Heroes that seek encounters aim at renown, but are often foiled; whilst the more wary are content to be upon their guard, cautious and circumspect to secure all at home, and if they are less applauded, they are less exposed. And, to bring this home to the case before us, what occasion is there to do more? it has indeed a specious appearance to ask, What lack I yet? what is farther to be done? It looks as if a man wanted room to exercise his virtue within the known and ordinary limits of his duty; but when all is done, the utmost perfection this life is capable of lies within them. To be chaste and temperate, just and good, is to be all that God expects, and to be so without fault or defect was the peculiar prerogative of his Son alone. But there is reason to believe, that those people advanced most successfully towards perfection in these virtues, who do not encumber themselves with unnecessary difficulties; who thankfully enjoy the innocent pleasures and comforts the law allows, and neither entangle themselves with vows, nor voluntary austerities. And to think otherwise is an insolent conceit, not much short of

blasphemy; for it is to arraign the wisdom of God, to imagine that he has given a rule of life to mankind that might be mended or improved. A prudent Christian will therefore abide in it, and will not be tempted when he sees others fly out beyond him; they may be lost in new ways, or discover their folly and return back with shame; but he goes on safe and secure, he knows the road, and he knows it will conduct him to the regions of eternal happiness.

But to conclude with an inference or two. The first I shall make is from the case of the young man, that if one so well qualified in all other respects was hindered by the love of his riches from entering into the number of Christ's disciples, we ought to be extremely careful that nothing gain so far upon our affections as to interfere with our duty. A prudent man will never disclaim his pretence to lawful liberty; it is foolish to bring himself under unnecessary restraints, and he knows not how his affections may fret and gall him for it afterwards; but he will be careful notwithstanding to use his liberty with temper, and if he sees occasion will withhold and abridge himself: for appetites are given us to govern, not to extinguish, and are to be gratified or curbed as they are more or less manageable. When therefore he perceives any affection to

grow, he will set himself in time to keep it under; for though it may be entertained whilst it consists with his duty, he will never suffer it to come in competition with it, nor will its greatest importunities be regarded when they are criminal. He then remembers what our Saviour has declared, that he that loves father, or mother, or wife, or children, or estate, or life, more than him, is not worthy of him; and needs no time to deliberate which of the two he should reject or adhere to, when the choice lies betwixt this world and that which is to come: for it would be dangerous to the last degree to hearken to the insinuations of pleasure or interest at such a time. He that suffers them to parley, lies open to all their charms, which have a pernicious influence in darkening his judgment, and he may be bewitched by them without persuasion or conviction.

The second inference I shall make is, that since we are so very apt to be favourable to ourselves, and conceit the best of our own performances, it is requisite we should by serious reflections make a scrutiny into the true state of our souls. People that go on in the same course and tenor of life, are apt to grow supine and careless; they do not perceive how errors and ill habits get ground upon them, nor do they apprehend danger till it is almost un-

avoidable: we have instances of this every day in the examples of men who run out of their estates, and reduce their affairs to a desperate condition, very often beyond a possibility of retrieving, because they will not be persuaded to look into their accounts: would they be prevailed on to consider how matters stood with them, and bear the mortification of seeing the several items of their extravagance pointed to; would they submit to the easy method of moderate retrenchments, they would soon come within compass, and grow good managers; but whilst they resolve neither to see, nor hear, nor understand, they go on carelessly, and sink insensibly.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT COURT. NO DATE.

ON SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

JAMES iii. 17.

BUT THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, AND EASY TO BE ENTREATED, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY.

WE cannot read this Epistle without reflecting, that St. James was very ill satisfied with the persons to whom he directs it. We find none of those commendations bestowed upon them, which St. Paul is sometimes very liberal of in his Epistles; no kind insinuations, that seem to carry approbation along with them; but it wholly consists of reproofs and instructions; and even the instructions are expressed in a manner, not as if he presumed

they were already possessed of those graces and virtues he recommends, and was only desirous to quicken them in the exercise, but so as plainly to let them see he thought they either wanted, or were much defective in them. Some of them seem to have been impatient under the hardships Christianity exposed them to; others were fickle, and irresolute in their choice: some had entertained such exalted notions of faith, as lessened the obligation to moral duties, and made them negligent in the practice of them; others were still in bondage under the Mosaical rites, and knew not how to assert the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: some had weak and very imperfect notices of the doctrine that had been preached to them; whilst others were overconceited of their own knowledge and abilities, and could not be contented unless they might dictate: but all, especially they who bore it above their brethren, and assumed to themselves the authority of masters and teachers, appear to have had very little of the Christian spirit; for St. James discovers that there is scarce a passion to be thought on, which they had not raised to back their opinions, and such as presumed to differ were treated by them as enemies. He endeavours to make them sensible, that they were utterly in the wrong to imagine their

knowledge could have any relation to heaven, whilst it had these effects; they might contend eagerly, and perhaps for truth, something that might be right in idea, but the manner in which they did it, the inferences they drew from it, or the end they pursued, shewed it never came to them from the fountain of truth, for then it would have produced its own genuine fruits. "Who," says he, "is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you?" he has a ready way to make us understand the intrinsic value of it; "let him shew out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom; but if you have bitter envyings, and strife, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." So that we have here six essential properties or distinguishing characters of heavenly wisdom, i. e. of true religion; without which men may pretend to it as much as they will, and give it what names they please, call it catholic and apostolical, but they can never make it to be the same that Christ preached, that wisdom of the Father which descends from above.

It is believed St. James levelled this character of religion in a more especial manner against the Gnostics, who were expressly the reverse of it, the foulest and most detestable heretics that ever dishonoured the name of Christ, and yet above all others the greatest pretenders to wisdom: but every Christian professor is equally concerned in it; his graces and intellectual endowments, how brightly soever they may display themselves, must undergo this test, before we can with any security judge from whence he derives them. I beg leave, first, briefly to touch upon each of these properties in particular, whereby it will appear that St. James's assertion in the text is undeniable; and, secondly, to shew, that where religion is destitute of them, it has very pernicious and fatal effects.

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure." In the first place, or above all others, it must have this quality. Our Lord pronounces it to be the blessing reserved for such as are pure in heart, that they shall see God; as if they were to approach nearer, to have a fuller and clearer view of the divine perfections, than those souls that had been sullied with irregular desires. The chief end of his preaching was to bring his proselytes to purify the heart. People, before his appearance in

the world, were furnished with moral rules, and those in most cases exact, to direct them in the course of practical life; but so long as their actions were regular, they were less attentive to watch over and bridle the extravagance of their thoughts: but he calls upon them to reflect, that exorbitant doings were but the natural result of loose desires, which, if restrained only by external or prudential considerations, would in his account be as criminal as if they had passed into outward act. The body of a true Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost; but with that blessed Spirit can no pollution dwell; foolish and sensual desires must leave the place before he will vouchsafe to enter into it: and therefore it is plain, that where the Christian doctrine takes place, it will infallibly drive them out.

The second property of the wisdom from above is, that it is peaceable. It is not peevish, and impatient of contradiction; it calmly offers, but never forces itself upon us; it knows not how to revile or insult, or make its way by noise and outrage; it incroaches upon no man's property to enlighten his understanding, nor invades or embroils the civil power to assert its own: she needs not the assistance of passion, and she scorns to use it. Pride and envy, anger and malice, hatred and

cruelty, often serve their *own* ends under a pretence of zeal for *her* honour: but her aim is to gain assent, not conquest, to persuade, not compel; she despises all but the willing votaries, and where we see those auxiliaries, we may be sure falsehood or ill design is at the head of them.

The third property of heavenly wisdom is, that it is gentle, and easy to be entreated; condescending, allowing free debate to an opponent, and to an objection its full strength. It was remarkable in the Pharisees, whom St. James daily met with, (and the dispersed Jews it seems retained too much of the temper after their conversion,) that they were proud and assuming; our Saviour observed, how they affected preference and distinction in all public assemblies; and the Gospel informs us with what contempt they looked down upon such as were less superstitious and conceited than themselves: they know not how to reprove, but with scorn; nor how to instruct, but with a magisterial air: their dictates were to be received as laws, and some time before the coming of our Lord they carried their authority so high, as to give their traditions the preference; as appears from that instance he reproaches them with, whereby they set aside the first and most sacred of all natural obliga-

tions, that of duty to parents in relief of their necessities. But the Christian spirit teaches us to make all possible allowances to others, and to be severe only to ourselves; to blame, and even to correct with meekness, to suffer opposition, and hear objections patiently, to reply without heat, or unnecessary reflection; and where we find ourselves to gain ground, and perceive that conviction is growing upon a man, there especially to suppress the least appearance of vanity, and neither expose the weakness of his arguments, nor boast the strength of our own, but to use all honest arts to smooth the way to one that advances towards us, and do nothing to check his good inclination.

The fourth property of heavenly wisdom is, that it is full of mercy and good fruits. Mercy is the most amiable and endearing of all the divine attributes. When we consider God's infinite power, the idea is unspeakably awful. All things besides himself are the product of his will, and when he pleases to speak the word, they again become nothing: one is lost in the depth of this amazing contemplation; but it chiefly exercises the understanding and the judgment, and the affection it naturally works upon is fear. When the justice of God is the object of our thoughts, it overwhelms us

with terror and confusion, and our hearts even melt within us. "Lord, who may stand in thy sight when thou art angry?" Dare any man presume to say, I have obeyed thy will as far as I understood it; I have done my duty to the best of my ability? No, his own conscience would start up and contradict him, and make him sink under the burden of his guilt. But when the mercy of God comes in view, it raises his drooping spirits, and he looks up with confidence upon his Redeemer: here he discovers the inconceivable love of God towards him, and is transported with hope and joy: and is it possible for him afterwards not to endeavour at some weak resemblance of him in this adorable quality? It cannot be. If it has truly warmed his heart, it will make him the most compassionate, indulgent creature in the world: he will never look upon the faults of others, but with all the circumstances he can think on to lessen them in his eye; he will give due commendation, and, as far as is in his power, due reward, to merit; in doubtful cases he will hope the best; and where the evidence of things and the truth of his judgment will not suffer him to forbear censure, yet his reflections will be modest and sparing; and if in some cases he cannot choose but to condemn, he will notwithstanding lean to the good-natured side, think

of every thing that may be pleaded in mitigation of the sentence, and fall with as little weight upon the criminal as is possible. Whoever is inspired with wisdom from above, will find it thus to work within him; and if it has not these effects, we may safely pronounce it comes not from thence.

The fifth property of heavenly wisdom is, that it is without partiality; and indeed it is below a wise and an honest man to be otherwise; he needs go no further than natural reason to know that justice and truth are lost without it. But St. James knew how strong the prejudices of education and custom were, which enter early and easily into the mind, when reason can scarce be said to be awake; and before it gains strength to dispute the possession, it is often won over to their side, and turns its whole force in their defence. He learned, from every day's experience, that interest and passion were very difficultly prevented from mixing with the judgment: they work so subtilly, that people are many times under their influence, when they think they sit loose from them: which made the prophet Nathan accost David in a parable, and shew him his guilt under a third person, that he might more easily bring him to condemn himself. He knew that some people paid an im-

moderate deference to authority, and thought it needless to examine what it offered to them; that antiquity likewise bore great sway with them, and they could hardly prevail with themselves to make error, that had been long in possession, give way to truth; whilst others, who saw their weakness, fell into the contrary extreme, and were too apt to refuse both to authority and antiquity the regard they might justly claim. These things he knew, and needed not to be told that human wisdom too willingly gave way to some, and struggled but faintly against the rest. But they must all give place where true religion enters; that hearkens to no secret insinuations, nor is biassed by any indirect inclination; it regards no man's person or circumstances, but is the same to all, and in all cases immutable and inflexible. St. Paul was not wanting in affection or respect to St. Peter, but that did not induce him to acquiesce in his authority: he made bold to examine the reason of his conduct, and not finding it sufficient, withstood him to the face. St. Peter was a man, and not exempted from mistake; but had he had no other wisdom than what the world pretends to, it is very probable that pride, or some other passion, would have raised his resentment, and furnished him with arguments, or at least with obstinacy,

to insist upon what he did: but his wisdom came from above, it was gentle and easy to be entreated, he yielded to conviction without reluctancy, the dispute fell immediately, and he gave to St. Paul the right hand of fellowship.

The sixth and last property of heavenly wisdom is, that it is without hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, in the largest notion of the word, is taken to be any sort of conduct in life whereby a man endeavours to appear other than he really is. It is acting a part, as a player does upon a stage, personating somewhat that does not belong to his true character: and in this sense it has been understood and used by profane writers; but it has long been restrained to a more limited signification, and applied only to such as have acted the religious part; who, by false shews and pretences, have laboured to gain the reputation of piety and virtue, of charity and tenderness to mankind, or any thing else that is looked upon as an ingredient in the composition of a good man: in short, it is a form of godliness without the power of it. And this is a frightful character, that every body pretends to shun. Worldly wisdom disclaims it, even whilst it works under it; and therefore one would think St. James needed not to have informed us, that the wisdom from

above had no tincture of it: but superstition is so apt to grow up in weak minds, outward forms are so much easier than spiritual exercises, people are so inclinable to lay the stress of religion upon them, and are so possessed with an imagination that they may compensate for their defects in some points by an abundant zeal in others, that it is very necessary they should be made to understand that these dispositions come not to them from above.

And now though I have been very short upon these heads, yet I hope, from what has been said, it sufficiently appears, that a true Christian must be a virtuous, inoffensive, good-natured, sincere man. And what a blessed change would be in the world, if the name of Christian always carried these good qualities along with it! but it is very evident it did not so in the Apostles' days, much less has it done so since their time. People quickly brought the profession of Christianity to comport with their lusts and interests, and instead of subduing their passions, they turned them into the religious channel, and then suffered them to be at full liberty: they very early deluded themselves with an imagination that they were sanctified vessels, that could receive no blemish from external actions: and in every age we have heard of hair-brained, licentious people, with

whom the same notion has prevailed; and therefore it is plain we must have something else whereby to know that a man is a Christian, besides his bare asserting it, or pretending a zeal for the profession of it. And our blessed Lord has told us what that is; it must be a life and practice suitable to it; "by their fruits ye shall know them." Let it then appear, that all who have listed themselves under his banner, have as much of religion as mankind could have before his coming; that they have the law of God written in their hearts, that they are honest and upright, do to others as they would be done by, and require no allowances to their own frailties and infirmities but what they willingly make to others; and we shall not be backward to grant that they have the proper foundation which revelation builds upon, and upon which only it can stand. We will admit them to be duly qualified for larger measures of grace, that faith may have its perfect work; till they come in the unity of it, and of "the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" but to tell us they believe, when we cannot discern this evidence of it, is impudently imposing upon the world, and blasphemously contradicting the testimony of Christ, who has given them fair

warning that there will come a time when, in spite of all their boasted pretences, he will persist in it that he never knew them. What will it then avail them to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Can we be strangers to thee, who have had such convincing proofs of thy power and presence amongst us? The plea may seem to have something in it, but he did not think it worth notice: the answer still is, "I know you not; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity." Can it be believed a man purifies his heart as the Gospel requires, who thinks that any thing short of repentance can do it? or that he makes that his rule, when he fondly imagines an imperfect repentance may be made complete by what St. Paul calls "bodily exercise?" He says, "it profits little," and a little influence we may allow it, for it may bring men under some restraint as to outward actions; but there it spends its whole force; it can never reach the passions themselves, nor has any natural efficacy to change the mind. Shall a man persuade us that he has faith, who takes upon him to compel us to think as he does? It is impossible. He does not so much as know what faith is, when he proceeds so absurdly as to make use of violence

to usher it in. Faith is a voluntary act, a free assent to a proposition which takes place in the mind, exactly in proportion to the evidence it brings along with it; which evidence is never made clearer by being offered in a boisterous manner, nor can all the cruelty in the world add weight to an argument; but if faith be no more than a declaration of assent to what this or that body of men are agreed in—if we are to take upon trust what they deliver, without examination—it must be confessed faith is then an easy work, and force a proper means of conveying it, but it can never be a part of the reasonable service God expects from us; it goes no further than the tongue, and gives no employment to the understanding. True; nor do they who struggle for this sort of faith ever desire it should; their business is to establish their own authority more than to enlighten your mind; and when they have brought men to this passive temper, their dominion is fixed: they no longer have that unruly, that untractable thing called reason to deal with, but a manageable animal, who is soothed in his ignorance, and persuaded he can never be out of the way whilst he submits to be blindly led. And what are the consequences that follow? Alas! they are dreadful beyond imagination! A person thus disposed is ready to swallow

the most palpable contradiction. He is not to object or dispute: the point has been maturely considered, and is already determined, and he must not pretend to be wiser than his teachers. Doubts and scruples are more faulty than irregular actions, and instead of clearing them up, he should set himself to suppress them, or not expect to live in peace. He is prepared to be as superstitious as his director pleases to make him; and the less he understands, the more he is disposed to it, for there is no difficulty in complying with outward forms: and when he has done so, his business is done; the virtue or efficacy of them is not the subject of his enquiry.

To what a despicable low degree is human nature sunk in such a state! And yet this, God knows, is not the worst of it, for superstition is big with every mischief that can disorder the world; nay, it goes a great way to put God out of it; it stirs up men to a passionate desire of having every one think and act as they do, and to restless endeavours for bringing it to pass. The Scribes and Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte; their pains, it seems, were indefatigable even in the gaining of one man; and, after all, to what end? Was it to make him just, and upright, and benefi-

cent, and to teach him to subdue and regulate his passions? Our Saviour gives another account of it. He tells them plainly to their faces, it was to make him two-fold more the child of hell than he was before. When once he was brought over, it was expected he should exceed in bigotry, and double the diligence in their service, which they had used in perverting him. This desire makes them stick at no means that can be thought on to accomplish it: they put themselves into all shapes, study the humours and passions of men, and address themselves to that which is predominant; and (as St. Paul expresses his justifiable condescension in promoting the truth) they make themselves, in the most pernicious manner, and in direct opposition to it, "all things to all men;" subtle frauds, calumny, slander, downright falsehood, nay, and if we can take their words, perjury itself may be made subservient to the Gospel; and if these arts prove insufficient, violence and cruelty must come in to their assistance. And at such a time tenderness and compassion become criminal; that sympathy, which is born with us and rooted in our natures, whereby we are touched with the misery of others, and even feel a part of what they suffer, must be extinguished. It is looked upon

to be a mark of grace to behold their sufferings with unconcern, nay, to help to increase them in this life, notwithstanding the opinion they have, that they will be exquisite and eternal in the next. To prove this, do we need to go to any of those loathsome prisons, where the inquisition has its residence, where miserable wretches are dragged in they know not why; terrified and tortured into the confession of crimes, which the court will not vouchsafe to accuse them of; condemned to end their lives in flames, and led to them in all the pomp of cruelty, under the most ignominious and barbarous insults; and this sometimes for a false and malicious suggestion; or, if true, of no greater importance than that a poor man did not think he ought to bow to a stock or a stone? Do we need, I say, to go to the inquisition for proof of this? Is there a country in the known world, where superstition has not been attended with these effects? What tumults and wars has it occasioned! what murders and massacres has it perpetrated! History is full of them, and there is scarce a place that has not felt them. And that no infamous circumstance may be wanting to shew the spirit that works in them, alliances and friendships have been formed to cover them; seasons of tranquillity and appa-

rent good agreement have been chosen wherein to execute them; and people who have had no disposition to provoke, or means to attempt it, have been despoiled of all, and so inhumanly treated, that the stroke of grace would have been a mercy to them.

I forbear to add more; it is time I should conclude: and having set before you the wisdom from above, and shewn in how direct an opposition worldly wisdom stands to it, is there occasion to betake myself to arguments, effectually to engage you in the pursuit of it? If there were, I need go no further than the Proverbs of Solomon, to be furnished with the best in great variety. There you have his authority, that the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold: that she is more precious than rubies, and all the things that can be desired are not to be compared to her: that length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace: that she is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and that happiness will be the portion of every one that retaineth her. These are the words of one that spoke from experience, and by the Spirit of God, and he is so copious upon

the subject, that he seems never to go from it but with reluctancy.

May it please Almighty God to endue every one of us with this heavenly wisdom, in such a measure as may enable us to obey his will in this life, and to obtain the reward of our obedience in the life to come.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT COURT. NO DATE.

ON REPENTANCE.

LUKE xv. 20.

AND HE AROSE AND CAME TO HIS FATHER, BUT WHEN HE WAS YET A GREAT WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM, AND HAD COMPASSION, AND RAN, AND FELL ON HIS NECK, AND KISSED HIM.

IT is not possible to conceive how the folly of man and the misery to which it brings him, or the infinite compassion and boundless love of God, can be more lively expressed than in this parable before us. We have here a younger son impatient of his father's government, and arrived to such a degree of confidence, as to ask that he might have the conduct of himself, and the management of his own fortune put into his hands; not that he had thoughts of

improving either, but that he might ramble, and riot, and give the reins to his appetites. He has his will, and he pursues it. But what follows? His goods were quickly consumed by his extravagant way of living, his wants grew thick upon him, and, to complete his misery, his hopes of relief were taken away by a public calamity, a famine in the land. In this forlorn estate he betakes himself to the lowest condition of servitude, to feed swine, and, if it might be, to feed himself as they did; but even this is not allowed, and below this he cannot sink. Could he possibly have arrived at a subsistence, (how poor soever, and how despicably soever obtained,) there is too much cause to suspect he had not yet returned to himself; for we must not imagine, that till his wants pinched him thus severely, he never once thought of the plenty of his father's house: no doubt he did it often, but could not prevail upon himself to think of going thither; for there was order, and regularity, and business, and, in the use of all their plenty, a just regard to the rules of sobriety and temperance; and what was yet more forbidding, he must carry home his shame along with him, acknowledge himself to have acted a rash, a foolish, and a rebellious part, to be unworthy the name of a son, and all the advantages he might claim

from that relation. It might likewise increase his reluctancy, to consider that he lay open to his father's reproaches, must expect to have his follies again set before his eyes, with every aggravating circumstance that might help to quicken his sense of them; or, at least, must bear his expostulations, Why would you leave me? Why would you forsake me? Could you expect better treatment abroad than at home? or a kinder reception amongst strangers than in your father's house? And these were grating, bitter reflections, such as nothing but extremity could surmount. But here his imagination increased his difficulties, and made him apprehend obstacles which he would never meet with; for he needed but to resolve, and the business was done. He had made experiment how provokingly a son could offend; but he did not know the tenderness of a father, nor how generously and entirely he could forgive; for so soon as "he arose, and came to his father, when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." The son indeed (as became him) made an humble confession; but conversion was that which satisfied the father, who, being impatient afterwards of any thing that might continue his son's grief or his shame, would not so much as

seem to hear or understand his apology, but called for the best robe and the ring, was uneasy till he had reinvested him in his favour, and ordered preparation to be made for entertainment and rejoicing. This is the happy conclusion of repentance, which on God's part is made as easy as is possible for Omnipotence to contrive; "he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not;" nay, he pardons and forgives in the same free manner.

But to come to the more particular consideration of the text; we find in it, first, the prodigal's repentance; "he arose, and came to his father:" and, secondly, the readiness of God's gracious acceptance, "when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." The former proposition gives us occasion to enquire, first, what repentance is; secondly, what are the difficulties that attend it; and these bring us, in the third place, to discover; how it comes to pass that God has so much indulgence for penitent sinners, as seems to exceed his love for those who had never offended.

And first, let us consider what repentance is. The Greek and Latin words whereby this duty is expressed signify a recollection, a change of mind for the better, or a return to, or recovery

of, that wisdom which we seemed to have lost in the conduct of life; for every offence against the law of God is a deviation from right reason, and in every step we make towards our duty, we assert our title to it. When the prodigal, like one awakened out of a lethargy, began first to discern the misery of his condition, and the lamentable circumstances in which he was, the text only observes, that he came to himself, he began to feel and to recover out of that stupidity which had sunk him almost below the animal life; but so soon as he began to exercise his understanding, it directed his steps towards God; he then arose, and came to his father, and perceived it to be his best and wisest part to bring his mind to a conformity with the will of God. For what is it that God requires of us. Does he exercise a tyrannical despotic power, and impose upon us hard conditions, to no other end but that he will be obeyed? Far be it that such a blasphemy should enter into our thoughts. The whole universe is the result of his goodness, and there is not a creature in it but if it would move regularly, and as he has ordered, would thereby attain to the utmost perfection of its nature. There is not a more infallible maxim in divinity, than that whatever is our duty, is undoubtedly our interest too: not as it is our

interest to obey one who has rewards and punishments in his hands, who infallibly knows when his commands are and are not executed, and will dispense them accordingly ; but as the command is naturally productive of the reward, and benefit a necessary consequence of obedience. For herein the wisdom and goodness of God are displayed, in ordering the course of nature by the wisest means to the best end. And to explain this by being a little more particular, what is most desirable in this life? Why undoubtedly the poet's wish is that of every man, to have a sound mind in a sound body, that is, a good understanding and a good constitution; but can a single instance be given in any thing called virtue, that does not naturally tend to preserve and improve these? or is there a vice, a deviation from rule, that does not infallibly bring some prejudice or inconvenience to them? And what would a man wish for after this life? Would it not be something which by woeful experience he finds is not possible to be arrived at here? Would he not desire a full and free exercise of his intellectual faculties? to carry his disquisitions into the very nature and causes of things, and to have nothing escape his knowledge and penetration? And is any thing so likely to dispose and fit us for this, as tempe-

rate living, constant devotion, and habitual meditation? They that are unacquainted with them, do not know their operation; but nobody can use them, and not find his soul enlivened. The exercise of the mind gives strength and vigour to it, enables it to dispel the clouds and vapours that obscured it, and makes it shine in its full lustre. Could repentance be any thing else than a right mind, it could not be that that would ever carry us to God; for there is no address acceptable, no approach to him any other way: it is this only that he regards, and by this only that actions are estimated. The voluptuous man finds his fortune shrink, the vicious perceives his health impaired; and if they at last grow thoughtful, and betake themselves to soberer causes, is it so much to be wondered at, or is there merit in what they do? A man may love his follies as much as ever, that may no longer dare to venture their ill consequences; and a man may be as profuse as ever in his inclinations, whom yet the sense of poverty may keep under restraint. These men indeed stop short of the prodigal; they are not so violently, so thoughtfully, hurried on to ruin as he was; but the only difference betwixt them is, that they come a little sooner to themselves; in all that they have done

hitherto they are but come to themselves; only brought by what they see and feel to know that poverty is near, and in the road they are in will certainly overtake them: but they cannot be said to go towards God till they discern the plenty of his house, are convinced that there only it is to be had, and are carried to it by those two filial respects of love and obedience. I will not here enumerate the several degrees of repentance, nor take upon me to shew from what motives it may take its rise, and by what steps the progress of it is continued; but only say, in short, that from what occasion soever it may spring, or by what means soever it may be carried on, it will remain defective and incomplete till perfected in the love of God.

But let us consider, in the second place, what are the difficulties that attend repentance. It must be confessed they are many and great, and enough to startle a sinner at the first opening of his eyes; but since the work is absolutely necessary, and a man irrecoverably lost without it, the formidable appearance is an unanswerable argument against delay, and should excite the utmost industry in the attempt, but can no way excuse despondency or distrust. I will instance in some of the

chief, and shall not dissemble their strength; for when we come afterwards to compute our own succours, we shall find ourselves sufficiently enabled to encounter them.

The first, the most obvious, and indeed the greatest of all, is, that it crosses the grain of our natural inclination, insomuch that mortification and self-denial, which are so hard of digestion to a carnal appetite, are but parts of it. To enquire now into the reasons why God should put mankind into this state of probation, and suffer him to be, as it were, besieged with temptations, whilst he carries enemies within that always desire to hold correspondence with them, would be beside our present purpose: but so we know it is in fact; and St. Paul spoke from universal experience when he said, that whilst he would do good, even at the very time that his intention was upright and sincere, evil was present with him; the temptation still continued to have some strength, and the irregular inclination was not quite suppressed; the mind and the body drew different ways, and he found they must be separated before the one could entirely be free from the importunity of the other. And since this is the case, how many struggles and efforts must it cost a sinner, even after he has smarted for and is become sensible of his

follies, before he can sincerely be out of love with, or heartily condemn, the error of his ways, and submit his judgment to the reason of a law that contradicts his appetite. It is true, a man of reflection cannot be easy under the sense of having done any thing which he knows not how to justify to himself; and every body that believes a God, must be grieved so oft as he thinks he has offended him; but therefore neither of these are repentance, but the natural result of reasonable reflections; for when the temptation presents, it is again closed with, and the succeeding sorrow (if there be any) arises not from the sin, but the consequences of it. And yet to go beyond this is more than a great many people have learnt to do, who would notwithstanding fain entitle themselves to the grace of repentance, and who, if they would search their hearts, must confess they had never made their approach to God by an unfeigned submission of their wills to his; for to will, is oftentimes more difficult than to do; and men can frequently restrain themselves from the actual commission of sins, from secular considerations of danger, interest, or reputation, which their wills at the same time go readily into, and with the guilt whereof in our Saviour's account they are therefore justly chargeable.

A second difficulty that attends repentance is, that the generality of men delay and put it off, till their sins are become habitual, and then every body's experience affords variety of instances how inveterate habits are, and how hardly to be eradicated. We see daily examples of those, who, by the customary use of an impertinent word or ridiculous gesture, become so wedded to it, that neither the admonitions of their friends, nor spiteful remarks of their enemies, are able to cure them: and yet these carry no temptation, no pleasure along with them, nor does any open or secret complacency arise from the use of them, but the animal spirits get the start of the understanding: upon such and such occasions they move as they have been accustomed, before the person thus enslaved is aware of or able to prevent it. And if this be the case in animal motions, and in actions of an indifferent nature that afford neither pleasure nor profit, nor have any other support but the bare force of repetition, what shall we say to pleasures that have taken deep root, and have corrupted nature and our passions on their side? You cannot offer to remove these, but you tear the heart strings, and life and the beloved sin are twisted together. This would seem a figurative and strained expression, but that experience has

convinced us it is literally true, and most notoriously in the case of immoderate drinkers, and such as accustom themselves to the use of spirits; which though they gradually prey upon life, yet become at last necessary to it, and cannot be forborne without endangering its extinction. And is not that man arrived to a deplorable state, who has sinned so long till either he must hazard his life, or proceed to sin on? it is a miserable choice; and a life so protracted can, without the infinite mercy of God, afford no very comfortable conclusion. How few are the examples of men that have been brought off from the customary use of oaths in common conversation? and yet there is scarce the colour of a temptation to the sin, nor would any inconvenience, displeasure, or uneasiness succeed the forbearance of it; but they continue to talk as they formerly did, and oaths slip in, and take their usual place in the discourse, unthought of and unobserved by the speaker. In the eastern parts of the world, the great pretenders to sanctity discover it in the ill treatment of their bodies, and if they can but put themselves into an uncouth posture, and continue in it, they infallibly arrive to the reputation of saints, and are constantly attended with the veneration of the people; but we are told, that after some time the forced becomes a

natural situation, that they are not then able to draw in the extended limb, or to dispose it otherwise if they would. And we ought all seriously to consider, how far this may hold with relation to the mind, and whether it be possible, at least without extreme difficulty, to bring it back to its former rectitude, when it has received and continued in a wrong ply.

A third difficulty in repentance arises from partiality to ourselves, and the false stating of our case. Sometimes men will not be persuaded, that what is called a sin really is so, at least they believe it represented in a magnitude above its due proportion; or if this be admitted, yet it receives abatement in their particular cases; allowances must be made to them which others cannot pretend to, or they have virtues and other good qualities that overbalance them; and whilst these thoughts continue, there is no arriving at a sincere repentance. A learned gentleman has observed, that there can be no occasion for private confession of sins to a priest, under the notion of his being the spiritual physician, and the necessity of his knowing men's particular cases, that he may prescribe accordingly; because, says he, there is but one sort of physic in all spiritual maladies, and that is repentance; and there is but one safe and certain rule for pro-

portioning the dose, and that is, that you be sure to give enough. And this is undoubtedly true, and every body may be his own physician so far: he knows his remedy, and he knows how to avoid error in the use. But when he judges of his own distempers, it is his interest to be nice and critical to the last degree, to suspect his constitution, to be always upon the watch, and not to suffer the least alteration, without examining what tendency it may have, and how far it is likely to affect his health: for otherwise a disease may creep upon him by insensible degrees, and he may be under dangerous symptoms, when he scarce apprehends himself to be amiss; and then he applies his physic, (I will not say too late,) but much later than he should have done, and when it will not operate so kindly and easily as if he had taken the distemper in its beginning, before it had gained a head, and been in a condition to dispute possession.

A fourth difficulty in repentance, and the last I shall mention, is, that the sinner usually frames a false idea of it to himself. He is called upon to forsake those things wherein he imagines the pleasure and satisfaction of life to consist, and fancies himself going into a sullen uncomfortable state of self-denial, wherein he must renounce all present happiness, that he

may entitle himself to that which is to come. And this imagination, false as it is, is almost unavoidable; because the sinner in his unconverted state has no taste or relish of intellectual pleasures, nor any conception of those joys, which arise to good and pious men from the consideration of having done their duty, and the apprehension that they are in the favour and under the protection of God. And we cannot wonder that this should damp his spirits when he first sets upon this great and important work; but he ought to know, and when he is better instructed in the Christian school will understand, that religion does not require to smother and suppress, but only to regulate the appetite, nor forbids any enjoyment this world affords, but only gives directions how they are to be obtained, and used; teaches us to set a right value upon them; and to keep them in that due subordination in which they stand to better things. To cut off the right hand, to pull out the right eye, to take up the cross, and to forsake all relations, and even a man's own life, are indeed of constant obligation, but not of constant practice. A Christian is bound to be always ready, and in a disposition of obedience to these commands, but not to go into the actual execution of them, unless circumstance and the nature

of things require it. When any thing comes in competition with the love of God, it then becomes the proper object of my hatred; I must disclaim and renounce it; but if it keeps its due distance, does not endeavour to usurp upon my affections, nor struggles to keep its place when it ought to give way, it is argument sufficient that it is under command, and need not be discharged till occasion require.

I come now to consider my third particular, whence it comes to pass that God has so much indulgence for penitent sinners, as seems even to exceed his love to those who had never offended; for "there is joy," says our Saviour, "in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." And first, the great obstacles and impediments that the sinner meets with in the way of his repentance may be one cause, for we usually rate and value an enterprize in proportion to the difficulties that are encountered in the performance; and the greater and more insuperable they may seem, the more the courage and firmness of mind, the spirit and bravery of the undertaker, appears; which hundreds of others who have escaped the trial, if it had fallen upon them, might have been found destitute of. The eldest son was offended at his father's cle-

mency, thought his own constant obedience undervalued, and proceeded so far in his resentment, as to expostulate and complain: but perhaps if he had wandered as his brother did from under the eye and government of his father, he might never have returned. The grace of God keeps some within bounds, and the same free grace calls others who have strayed to repentance; he that keeps the way, and he that after wandering returns to it again, both owe it to the same grace; but as far as natural powers or human concurrence may be regarded in either, he seems to have been left most to himself that went out of the road, and to have given the most evident proof of his application and diligence that recovered it again. Besides, a converted sinner is a bright example, his change is remarkable, provokes some to imitation, and upbraids all that continue in the sins that he has left; whereas a steady uniform virtue is less regarded, being of an equal tenor, and having nothing in it that occasions surprise.

But a second cause why God is so indulgent to penitent sinners is, that he may manifest the riches of his grace. We may break loose from his authority, and apply all the blessings he has given us to our own sinful purposes. We may be perverse, rebellious, and obstinate,

persist in our follies, and in a moral sense be even lost and dead: yet still his eye is upon us, he remembers that we are his offspring, and the very first motions of a return towards him are observed and accepted; at a great distance he knows and has compassion, runs, and meets, and embraces the convert. And what can magnify the idea of his infinite goodness and mercy like this reflection! how glorious are these attributes thus employed! and how powerfully must they operate upon an ingenuous temper! How must a sinner be overwhelmed with confusion, and yet how graciously is he kept from despair, when he sees and observes it! The goodness and mercy of God towards those that endeavour to obey him, though they are above all pretence of merit, and exceed even our reasonable hopes, are yet what he has given us leave humbly to expect, according to the common sentiments of mankind; we are assured he will accept and encourage honest endeavours, and what we learn from revelation concerning his nature and attributes, and his reconciliation to us through the merits of Christ, warrant us when we look for it; but that he should have patience under the highest provocations, pity us even at the time that we despise him and his laws, tarry and wait for our return to a better

mind, and entirely quit his indignation at the very first step of our approach towards him, nay, that he should immediately receive us into favour without punishment or reproach, these are amazing instances of condescension, and such as nothing but infinite compassion could stoop to.

A third reason why God discovers so much indulgence for a penitent sinner may be, to teach us compassion and good nature and generosity towards each other; that we be not easily provoked, nor quick in our resentments, but watch patiently for the return of an offending brother, lay hold on the very first offers towards reconciliation, forgive freely and entirely without recollection or recapitulation, and renew the former friendship where sincerity appears, as if the breach had never been. For this doctrine of forgiveness, and in so generous a manner, is perhaps as difficult a lesson as any to which a Christian can apply himself. Self-love makes us extremely tender and sensible; the least touch of an affront goes to the quick, and we guard and fence against the access of one who has once done us injury, or if we can be content to come to better terms with him, yet we think a clearing of the matter requisite, and never think we can say too much to make him understand he has used us ill, and

given us just cause of complaint; and after all it is well if coolness and distrust do not still remain in our hearts. But this is not the method of God's dealing with us, who graciously passes over those preliminaries that would necessarily renew our grief and our shame, has his arms always open whenever we come to him, and never discourages our confidence in his favour by the remembrance of our past guilt. And what a mighty influence would this have upon our practice, if we seriously laid it to heart, and considered it as we ought. But it is the interest and artifice of the devil to keep up enmities amongst mankind; and accordingly he has introduced doctrines and principles that have no relation to those we meet with in the Gospel; nice and scrupulous rules, (of Honour they call them,) that make people always jealous of each other, suspicious, and catching at the least shadow of an affront, which afterwards they weigh by grains and scruples, and rigorously demand satisfaction at the utmost peril. And he has brought a great part of the world over into the belief, that a different conduct from this is an argument of an abject and degenerate spirit, and that the rules the Church prescribes are not practicable in other places. How great therefore is the necessity of a frequent recourse

to God's own example! and what can so effectually bring us to bear with each other's infirmities, to be mutually kind, forgiving, and compasssionate, as to see that the great Creator of heaven and earth is so towards us!

I have now done with what I proposed to speak to, and will only offer you two or three motives or inducements to repentance, and so conclude. And the first may be drawn from the difficulties that attend it. For since it is a work that of necessity must be done, these should hasten the attempts, and quicken our diligence; we may assure ourselves that delays increase their number and their strength, and the sooner we begin to struggle, the sooner and the more easily we shall gain the victory. Besides, it gives edge to and rouses the courage of a brave spirit, to see that the hardships he encounters give him occasion to exert his strength, are not lazily to be grappled with, and afford reputation and honour to the conqueror. If repentance were an ordinary or common task, what should give it so much value in the eyes of God? Allegiance is due to him from all his creatures, and when a revolter comes back, he is but where he ought to have been before; but since the devil is busy in seducing men, and applies his utmost force and subtilty to entangle them, it argues resolution

and courage to break through the toils, and God is always at hand to succour and support him when he has done.

A second motive to repentance is the consideration of the free pardon and acceptance of God. This is a motive that above all others works most strongly upon a generous mind, and without which many other considerations would be ineffectual. For since the greatest uneasiness our follies give us arises from the reproach of our own consciences, repentance would be attended with almost insuperable reluctancy, if the sinner must expect to have his memory refreshed, to have all his past misdemeanors ripped up, and to be schooled and chid before he was forgiven; for nothing wounds so deep as shame; and to have it inflicted from the hand that should heal, upon a man that is sensible of and has taken it to himself, is more than he can bear. Yet this is too common a practice in the world: an offended father thinks he must frown and look sour, and that his son will again start from his duty if he be not sometimes put in mind of his faults, and kept in awe by a reserved carriage; though I do not question, but that many young men have been made desperate by this sort of treatment, whom kinder usage would have brought to be tractable and obedient. But whenever

we repent we are secure, and certain that God will not use us thus: we can no sooner turn our eyes towards him, but his face will shine upon us; his displeasure will vanish as if we had never provoked him, and we shall enter into the immediate fruition of his favour in as full a manner as if we had never done any thing to forfeit it.

A third and the most encouraging motive to repentance is, that we shall have the assistance of God's grace; for otherwise it would be but a hopeless undertaking, for a man that has been shamefully foiled already, to contend against the world, the flesh, and the devil, upon his own strength. But when he finds that he has God on his side, he goes on with resolution, and confident to vanquish, for he can do all things through God that strengthens him; who, whilst we are under his conduct, delights to manifest his power in our weakness, and to make it triumph over the art and subtilty, the strength and force, of all our ghostly enemies. Which God of his mercy grant may be effected in us all, for the infinite mercy, &c.

AN

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A SCHEME

OF THE

ARMINIAN, CALVINISTIC, AND INTERMEDIATE DOCTRINES

RESPECTING

GOD'S DECREES, AND HUMAN SALVATION;

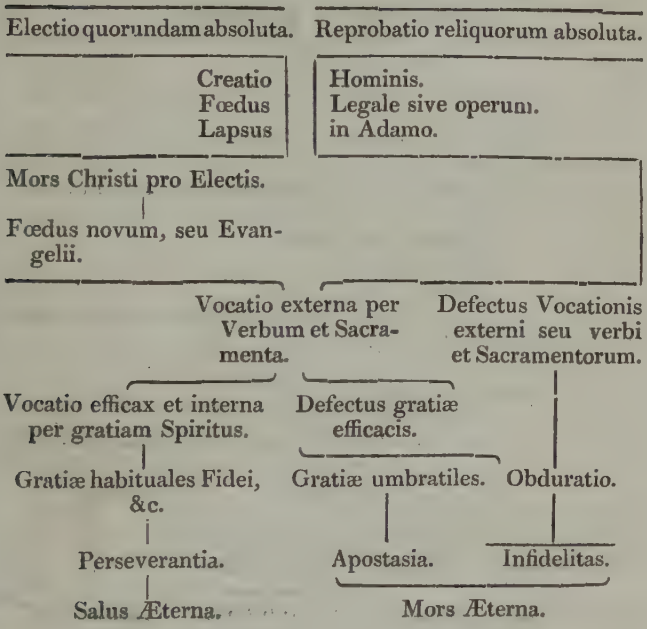
WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON EACH SYSTEM.

A literal Translation is subjoined of the Original Latin of the Author.

Series Decretorum Dei, causarumque et mediorum Salutis.

I. *Sententia rigide Calvinianorum extrema prima.*



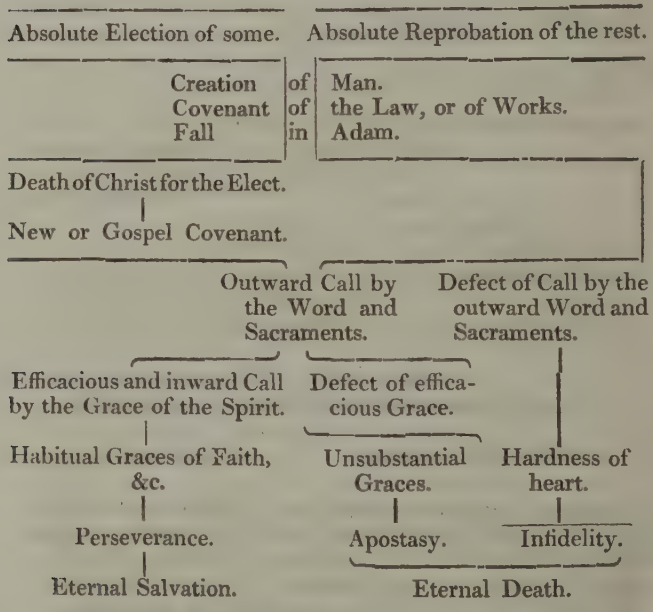
Sententia vel primo aspectu dura, quæque urgetur duabus maxime difficultatibus; altera, quod qui lapsui reprobationem præficiunt, (sive illi hominem ut creabilem sive ut jam creatum objectum Prædestinationis statuunt,) videntur in Dei justitiam simul et bonitatem non leviter impingere, quibus utrisque nihil dici potest pugnantius, quam hominem, nondum aliquid mali sua culpa promeritum, ad exitium destinare; altera, quod ex ista sententia sequi videatur, Deum in prædicatione verbi fide agere haud satis integra; quinimo serio illudere humano generi, dum vocat ad fidem in Christum et ad promissiones novi fœderis pariter cum electis reprobos;

ad quos tamen ex præcidanea sua intentione mors Christi et fœdus Evangelii nullo modo aut pertinent aut pertinere etiam possunt.

TRANSLATION.

A Series of God's Decrees, and of the Causes and Means of Salvation.

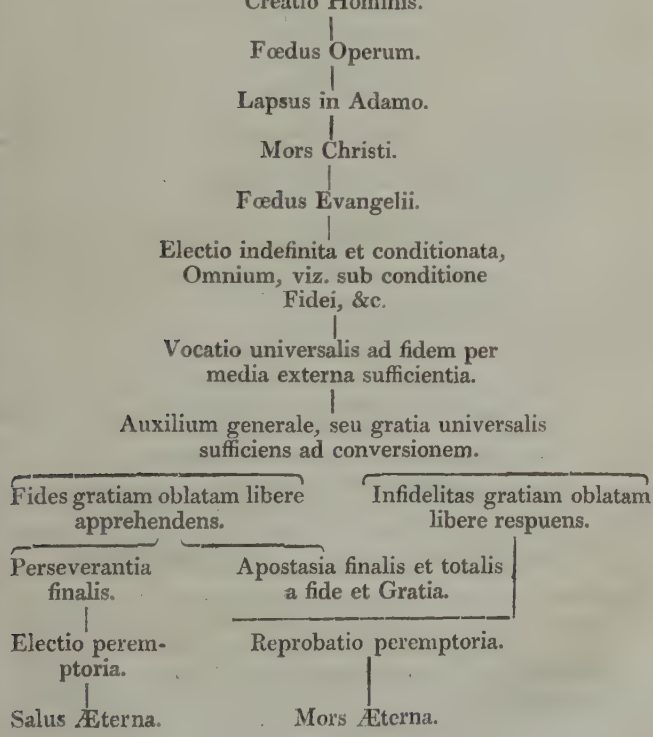
I. *The first extreme opinion, that of the rigid Calvinists.*



An opinion hard even at first sight, and which is encumbered with two difficulties in particular: the one, that they who set Reprobation before the Fall, (whether they consider man the object of Predestination as creatable, or as already created,) seem to make no slight attack on the justice as well as the goodness of God, to both which nothing can be men-

tioned more opposite, than the destining man to destruction, when he has not yet deserved any evil by his own fault: the other, that it seems to follow from that opinion, that God acts with bad faith in the preaching of the Word; moreover that he makes serious mockery of the human race, whilst he calls to faith in Christ, and the promises of the New Testament, not merely the elect, but also the reprobate, to whom, however, from his own pre-established intention, the death of Christ, and the covenant of the Gospel, neither pertain in any way, nor can pertain.

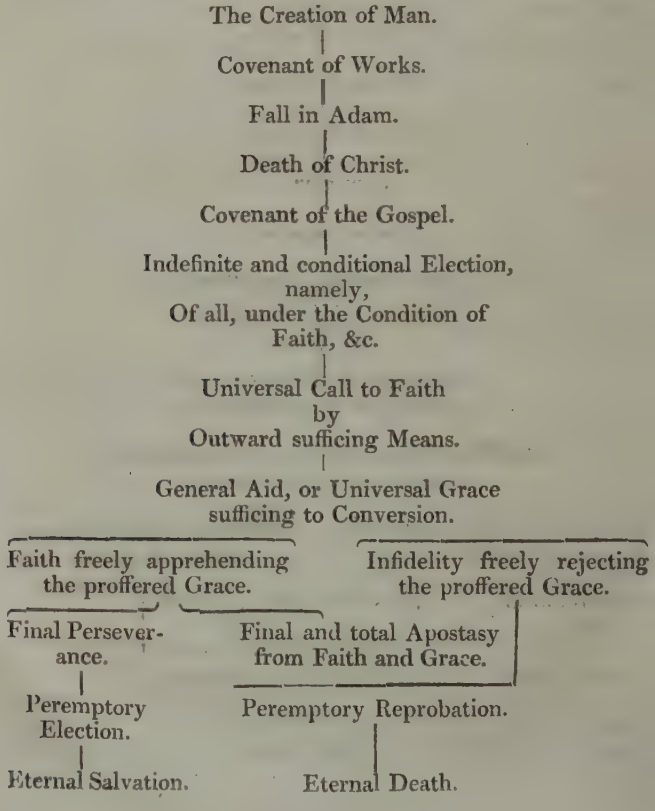
II. *Sententia Arminianorum extrema altera.*


Creatio Hominis.
Fœdus Operum.
Lapsus in Adamo.
Mors Christi.
Fœdus Evangelii.
Electio indefinita et conditionata, Omnium, viz. sub conditione Fidei, &c.
Vocatio universalis ad fidem per media externa sufficientia.
Auxilium generale, seu gratia universalis sufficiens ad conversionem.
Fides gratiam oblatam libere apprehendens.
Infidelitas gratiam oblatam libere respuens.
Perseverantia finalis.
Apostasia finalis et totalis a fide et Gratia.
Electio peremptoria.
Reprobatio peremptoria.
Salus Æterna.
Mors Æterna.

Qui sunt partium Arminianorum, quid intus ac serio sentiant nondum illis libuit explicato profiteri; ne eos juxta cum Pelagio sentire nimis palam constaret et liquido; cujus olim damnatas hæreses ab orco revocatas, distinctiuncularum duntaxat sublimiori lima politas, instaurarunt de novo; nec sanius locuti sed cautius: In istorum dogmate, cum alia debent esse merito suspecta, tum illud imprimis ad suum Authorem Pelagium est relegandum, quo statuitur divinæ tam Prædestinationis decretum, quam gratiæ efficaciam, ex naturalium virium exercitatione, voluntatisque humanæ inclinatione et determinatione omnino pendere.

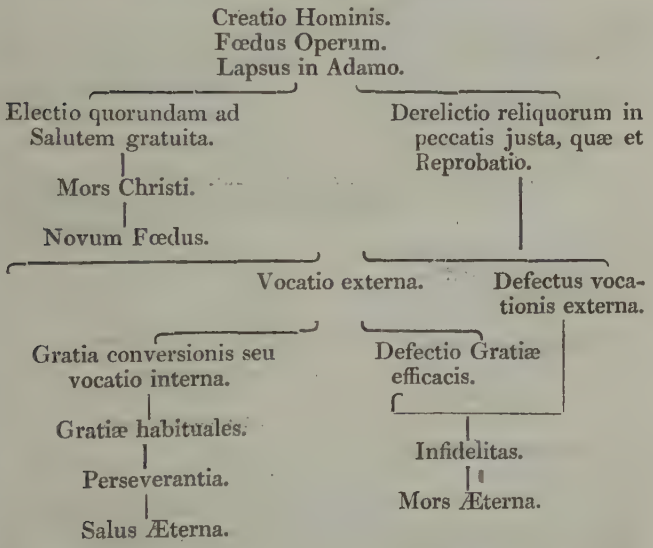
TRANSLATION.

II. *The second extreme Opinion, that of the Arminians.*


The Creation of Man.
Covenant of Works.
Fall in Adam.
Death of Christ.
Covenant of the Gospel.
Indefinite and conditional Election, namely, Of all, under the Condition of Faith, &c.
Universal Call to Faith by Outward sufficing Means.
General Aid, or Universal Grace sufficing to Conversion.
Faith freely apprehending the proffered Grace.
Infidelity freely rejecting the proffered Grace.
Final Perseverance.
Final and total Apostasy from Faith and Grace.
Peremptory Election.
Peremptory Reprobation.
Eternal Salvation.
Eternal Death.

They who are on the side of the Arminians, have not yet chosen explicitly to avow what are their inward and serious thoughts, lest it should appear too openly and clearly, that they agree nearly in opinion with Pelagius, whose long condemned heresies they have revived from darkness, and set up anew, polished only with the finer file of minute distinctions, and have not spoken more sensibly, but with greater caution. In their position, both other points are just matter of suspicion, and that especially ought to be referred to its author Pelagius, that both the decree of divine Predestination and the efficacy of grace are made to depend wholly on the exercise of natural powers, and the inclination and determination of the human will.

III. *Sententia intermedia, prima et communior.*

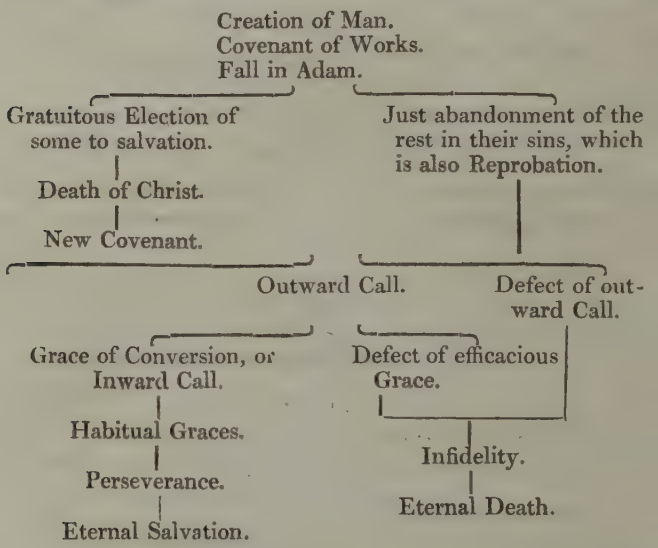


Hæc est opinio communior eorum Theologorum, qui a Lutheranis et Arminianis Calviniani dicuntur, in qua fuisse et ipsum Calvinum non pauci existimant; inque hoc uno differt hæc sententia a prima illa et duriore Supralapsariorum, seu rigide Calvinanorum, quod quam illa electionem anteri-

orem facit, hæc demum collocat post prævisum lapsum humani generis in Adamo; adeoque e duobus ejus sententiæ incommodis alterum facile vitat, constante nimirum ex ipso lapsu justitia Dei reprobantis quoscunque filiorum Peccatoris Adami; at posteriore illa difficultate, de vocatione, viz. reproborum ad promissiones fœderis, et fidem Christi, ex intentione Dei ad solos electos præcise pertinentes, non minus urgentur qui hac via incedunt, quam duræ illius sententiæ assertores.

TRANSLATION.

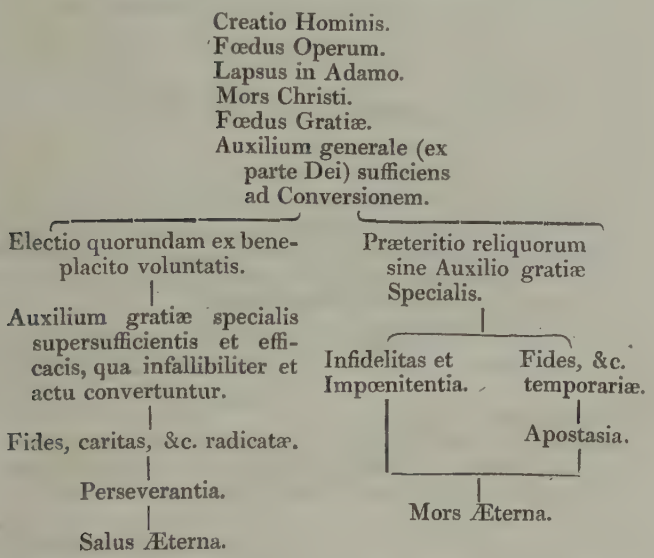
III. *An intermediate Opinion, the first and more common.*



This is the more common opinion of those theologians, who are called Calvinists by the Lutherans and Arminians, of which not a few suppose Calvin himself also to have been. And this opinion differs from the first and harder of the Supralapsarian or rigid Calvinists in this one point; that this places in fact election, which that makes anterior, after the foreseen fall of mankind in Adam, and thus easily avoids one of the inconveniences of that opinion, the justice (to wit)

of God reprobating any whatever of the sons of the sinner Adam appearing from the fall itself: but those who go this way are not less encumbered than the assertors of that hard opinion by the latter difficulty: that is, concerning the call of the reprobate to the promises of the Gospel and to the Christian faith, pertaining precisely to the elect only according to the intention of God.

IV. *Sententia intermedia secunda.*

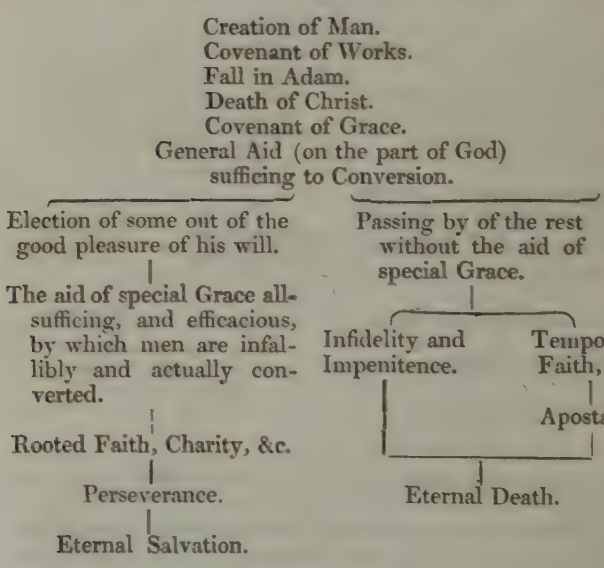


Scripsit non ita pridem, cum in superis esset, Reverendus quidam Præsul nostræ Ecclesiæ, brevem censuram super 5 capita Doctrinæ in Belgio controversæ; quæ teritur passim in manibus eruditorum; ejus arbitror hanc fuisse sententiam, quantum existimare licet ex isto opusculo; in qua, media incedens via, utriusque extremæ incommoda haud incommode declinavit: si vir pius et inter primos eruditus id egisset fusius et consulto, ut seriem decretorum Dei, causarumque et mediorum salutis integram exhiberet, non dubito quin ista omnia explicatius expositurus fuisset et accuratius; quo

minus tamen in hac sententia, (prout jam supra ὡς ἐν τύπῳ expressa est) acquiescam, præter alia nonnulla, illud inprimis facit, quod auxilium generale sufficiens ad conversionem Prædestinationi præficiat: nulla interim facta uspiam mentione vocationis externæ in verbo; cum auxilium istiusmodi generale, aut non sit omnino concedendum, aut certe cum externo salutis medio, Prædicatione viz. Evangelii conjungendum, ut sit commune electis et reprobis infra pomœria visibilis Ecclesiæ, non generale per extensionem etiam ad eas gentes quæ de salute per Christum parta ne fando quidem audivere.

TRANSLATION.

IV. *The second intermediate Opinion.*


Creation of Man.
Covenant of Works.
Fall in Adam.
Death of Christ.
Covenant of Grace.
General Aid (on the part of God) sufficing to Conversion.
Election of some out of the good pleasure of his will.
The aid of special Grace all-sufficing, and efficacious, by which men are infallibly and actually converted.
Rooted Faith, Charity, &c.
Perseverance.
Eternal Salvation.
Passing by of the rest without the aid of special Grace.
Infidelity and Impenitence.
Temporary Faith, &c.
Apostasy.
Eternal Death.

A certain Reverend Prelate of our Church not long since when alive wrote a short critique on the five heads of doctrine controverted in Belgium, well known to the learned. As far as I can collect from that short work, I think he held an opinion, by which he not inconveniently avoided the incon-

veniences of each extreme, by going a middle way. If the pious and singularly learned man had set to more at large, and with design to exhibit an entire series of God's decrees, and of the causes and means of salvation, I doubt not but he would have been likely to have set forth more accurately and explicitly all those points: from acquiescing however in this opinion I am prevented by this circumstance in particular, in addition to some other, that he sets general aid sufficing to conversion before predestination, no mention in the mean time being any where made of outward call in the word; whereas general aid of that kind is either not to be conceded at all, or certainly to be conjoined with an external mean of salvation, viz. the preaching of the Gospel; that it is common to the elect and reprobate within the pale of the visible Church, not general by extension also to those nations which have not even heard speak of salvation obtained through Christ[a].

[a] The Prelate, above alluded to, was Dr. Joseph Hall, successively Dean of Worcester, and Bishop of Exeter, and Norwich. He assisted at the famous Synod of Dort in 1618, which condemned the tenets of Arminius, and published a short Treatise, called, "*Via Media: The Way of Peace: in the five busy Articles, commonly known by the name of Arminius.*" He was not, however, present during the whole of the sitting of that Assembly, but was permitted by King James, at the solicitation of the Ambassador Lord Carleton, to return to England on account of ill health, being succeeded by Dr. Goade. After much suffering and persecution during the Civil Wars, he died in 1656, in his 82d year. See Bishop Hall's Works, in the Account of his Life by himself, and his Polemical Writings.

V. *Sententia intermedia tertia.*

Creatio generis humani.
Fœdus operum seu legale.
Lapsus in Adamo.
Mors Christi pro genere humano.
Fœdus Novum et Evangelicum de
Justitia et Salute per Fidem in Christum.

Electio quorundam in Christo omnino gratuita, ut participes sint fœderis, adeoque Justitiæ, Fidei, et Salutis per Christum partæ;
Hujus decreti executio fit per media.

Præteritio reliquorum et in massa corrupta derelictio, in manifestationem gloriæ Justitiæ Dei.

Extraordinaria de quibus non est a nobis temere aliquid Statuendum.

Ordinaria Gratia communis (et improprie dicta) vocationis externæ, per Verbum et Sacramenta [a].

Defectus Gratiæ communis et vocationis externæ per Verbum et Sacramenta.

Ecclesia visibilis et mixta.

Gratia specialis (et κυρίως dicta) salutaris, et secundum propositum vocationis internæ et efficacis, per Spiritum Sanctum renovantem corda Electorum, pro cujusque, viz. mensura captuque.

Defectus Gratiæ specialis et vocationis efficacis unde sequuntur vel

Gratiæ umbratiles et ὑποκρίτως dictæ, ut in Hypocritis.

Cæcitas mentis et obduratio cordis, ut in aperte impiis et profanis.

Apostasia finalis.

Ecclesia invisibilis Electorum.

Infantium per gratiam Sacramentalem in Baptismo collatam modo nobis imperceptibili.

Adultorum per Infusionem Gratiarum habitualium Fidei, &c.

Infidelitas pravæ dispositionis.

Infidelitas pure negativa.

Perseverantia in fide.

Impenitentia finalis.

Salus Æterna.

Mors Æterna.

De hac sententia quinta et ultima operæ fortassis erit pretium inquirere, an non sit tutior et commodior ad vitandas difficultates, quibus premuntur duæ extremæ sententiæ, quam duarum reliquarum alterutra: Videtur certe conformis Doctrinæ Sacræ Paginæ, scriptis Orthodoxorum Patrum, inque iis B. imprimis Augustini, et confessioni Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.

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[a] Vocationi huic externæ si quis annexum contenderit auxilium generale, sufficiens, (ex parte Dei,) ad conversionem, nisi homo sibi deesse voluerit, haud equidem multum repugnarem modo id caute et debite interpretetur.

V. *The third intermediate opinion.*

The Creation of Mankind.
The Covenant of Works or of the Law.
The Fall in Adam.
The Death of Christ for Mankind.
The New and Gospel Covenant concerning Justification and Salvation by Faith in Christ.

The Election of some in Christ entirely gratuitous, that they may be partakers of the covenant, and of the Justification, Faith, and Salvation obtained through Christ.

Passing by of the rest and the abandonment of them in a corrupt mass, to set forth the glory of God's Justice.

The Execution of this decree is made by means.

Extraordinary—about which we must make no rash assertions.

The ordinary common Grace (improperly so named) of the outward call by the Word and Sacraments [a].

Defect of common Grace, and outward call by the Word and Sacraments.

The visible and mixed Church.

Special and saving Grace (properly so named) and according to the purpose of an inward and efficacious call, by the Holy Spirit renewing the hearts of the elect, viz. according to the measure and capacity of each.

Defect of special Grace and efficacious call, whence arise either

Graces unsubstantial and synonymously called, as in Hypocrites.

Blindness of mind and obduracy of heart, as in the openly impious and profane.

Final Apostasy.

Invisible Church of the Elect.

Of Infants by the Sacramental Grace conferred in Baptism in a way to us imperceptible.

Infidelity of a depraved disposition.

Infidelity purely negative.

Of Adults by the infusion of habitual Graces of Faith, &c.

Perseverance in Faith.

Final Impenitence.

Eternal Salvation.

Eternal Death.

It will perhaps be worth while to enquire concerning this fifth and last opinion, whether it be not more safe and convenient, to avoid the difficulties with which the two extreme opinions are encumbered, than either of the two other. It certainly seems conformable to the Doctrine of the Sacred Page, to the writings of orthodox Fathers, and amongst the chief of these of St. Augustine, and the confession of the English Church.

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[a] If any one shall contend that general aid on the part of God sufficing to conversion be annexed to this outward call, unless a man shall choose to be wanting to himself, I would not much object, provided he make a cautious and due interpretation.

I. PAX ECCLESIÆ.

ALL the decrees of God are eternal, and his counsels therein unsearchable: in eternals, there is neither *prius* nor *posterius*, and therefore considered in themselves, and as they are in God, all the decrees of God concerning the whole course of man's salvation are *simul* and *semel*; and because eternal, therefore also coeternal; yet considered either in regard of their objects, or respectively to our apprehensions, there must be some order conceived amongst them, whereby one may be said to be before or after another, *ordine naturæ* and *ordine intelligendi*: for as in order of nature the intention of the end is before the deliberation concerning the means, the cause before the effect, the subject before the properties and accidents, &c. so we are not able to conceive of the decrees of God, unless we rank them in some such order, as seemeth most agreeable to the condition of their proper objects; as (for example) those wherein the end, or cause, or subject, is decreed to be *ordine intelligendi*, before those, wherein are decreed the means, effects, or accidents. But because the counsels of God herein are incomprehensible and unsearchable to our weak and finite understandings, it hence cometh to pass,

1. That they who have the greatest serenity of natural understanding, and the largest measure of divine revelation withal, must yet confess the unfathomed depths of the ways and judgments of God, which are *abyssus multa*, rather to be admired than searched into, so as they are not to hope or look after such a way of opening

these mysteries, as shall be *quietiva intellectus*, so totally and absolutely, but that some difficulties will still remain to make us cry out with St. Paul, *O altitudo!* otherwise these great and hidden mysteries of God should be no mysteries.

2. That men who cannot content themselves to be wise according to sobriety, whilst they have sought by searching into the counsels of God to bring the mysteries of faith within the comprehension of reason, have become vain in their imaginations, and enwrapped themselves in perplexed and inextricable difficulties, for the unwinding themselves wherefrom, they have been afterwards sometimes driven to devise and maintain strange opinions of very perilous and noisome consequence, which have been the original of most heresies and schisms in the Church.

3. That men also of sober understandings, and keeping within the due bounds of their gifts and callings, yet, by reason of the great difficulties of the things themselves, have much differed, and still will do, in their judgments and opinions one from another, in the ordering God's decrees concerning man's salvation, each man abounding in his own sense, and following that way, which seemeth to him clogged with the least and fewest difficulties, according as he apprehendeth them, although perhaps in *rei veritate*, or at least in the apprehension of another man, these very difficulties may be more and greater: hence the many differences among the Protestants, between the Lutherans and Calvinists, among the Romanists, between the Jesuits and Dominicans, and each of those again divided concerning predestination and reprobation, the power of man's free-will, the

necessity, efficacy, and extent of divine grace, the concurrence of grace with free-will, the universality and application of Christ's death, and some other points of the like nature. The premises considered, that amidst and notwithstanding all the variety of opinions, there may yet be preserved in the Church the unity both of Faith and Charity; these few things seem to me to be of profitable and important consideration.

1. That particular Churches would be as tender as may be in giving their definitions and determinations in such points as these, not astricting those that live therein determinatively either to the affirmative or negative, especially where there may be admitted a latitude of dissenting, without any prejudice done either to the substance of the catholic faith, or to the tranquillity of the Church, or to the salvation of the dissenter: in which respect the moderation of the Church of England is much to be commended, and to be preferred not only before the Roman Church, which with insufferable tyranny bendeth all her children upon pain of damnation to all her determinations, even in those points which are no way necessary to salvation; but also before sundry other reformed Churches, who have proceeded farther this way than our Church hath done.

2. When by reason of the importunate contentions and wranglings of learned men in particular Churches about points yet undetermined therein, differences shall be so far prosecuted as to come to open sidings, and partakings, and factions, (as it happened in the Netherlands, between[a] *remonstrantes* and *contraremonstrantes*,) so as for the composing the differences and maintenance of

[a] For this and following notes see page 345.

the public peace and tranquillity of the Church, it shall be needful for those Churches synodically to determine something in those points, that yet they would even then also proceed no farther in their determinations than the present necessity should enforce them; not requiring men, especially in points of lesser consequence to give (and that by oath) subscription or other like means to witness their express positive assent to such determinations, but permitting them to enjoy their own private opinions, in their own private bosoms, so long as they keep them to themselves, and do not, by venting them unseasonably, disquiet the peace of the Church therewithal.

3. That catechisms (for so much as they are intended for the instruction of children and ignorant persons in the first principles of their Christian religion) should not be forced with school points and private tenets, but contain only clear and undoubted truths, and such as are necessary unto Christian edification either in faith or life, the rest either altogether omitted, or but occasionally and sparingly touched upon, and not positively and doctrinally and conclusively delivered, before the Church have agreed upon them.

4. That private men should endeavour for so much ingenuity, as

1. To other men's speeches and writings, (especially where they intend to discourse but *exoterice* and popularly, not accurately and *dogmatice*) to afford a favourable construction, without taking advantage of some excesses, or exceptions at some improprieties and inaccuracies, so long as they are orthodox in the main subject of their discourse.

2. Not to obtrude any tenet as the received doctrine

of any particular Church, which either is not expressly contained in the public confession of the Church, or doth not apparently result thence by direct and immediate consequence, though the wit of man may make it seem at length, and by continuance of discourse to be probably deduced therefrom.

3. In their own writings to observe *formam sanorum verborum*, and to abstain not only from suspected opinions, but as much as may be also from phrases and speeches obnoxious to construction: for, 1. it is not enough, much less a thing to be gloried in, for a man to be able by subtlety of wit to find loop-holes how to evade, and by colourable pretences to make that which through heat of passion, or violence of opposition, hath fallen from him unadvisedly, to seem howsoever defensible. But he should have a care to suffer nothing to pass from him, whereat an ingenuous and dispassionate adversary (though dissenting from him in opinion) should yet have cause to take distaste, or exception: And besides, it were a thing of dangerous consequence in the Church, if every man should be suffered to publish freely, whatsoever might by some strain of wit be made capable of a good construction, if of itself it sounded ill and suspiciously: for so notions of popish or puritanical or other heretical or schismatical opinions, might unawares be conveyed into the minds, and impressions thereof be insensibly wrought in the hearts of men, to the great damage of the Church, and prejudice to the truth.

4. To acknowledge freely and readily to revoke whatsoever either error in *re* or misprision in testimony, or exorbitancy *in modo loquendi*, hath passed from their

pen, when it shall be fairly shewed them, and their judgments convinced thereof, rather than to seek to relieve themselves by excuses, colourings, or evasions.

5. That private men in particular Churches, who dissent in points yet undetermined by the Church, should not uncharitably intercharge each other with heresy or schism or any such imputation for so dissenting, so long as they both consent to the whole doctrine and discipline in the said Church established. As for example: in the points now so much debated amongst the divines of the Church of England, between the Calvinists and Arminians, (for I must take liberty for distinction sake to express them by those names which they usually bestow one upon the other,) why should either those men on the one side be branded with popery, who misliking Calvin's opinion rather choose to follow the Arminian, or those on the other side with Puritanism, who finding less satisfaction in the way of Arminius, rather adhere to Calvin, so long as the one sort and the other do entirely and freely and *ex animo* subscribe to the Articles, the Common Prayer Book, and that of consecration, and do not rend the unity or disturb the peace of the Church by these differences.

II. PERICULUM SCHISMATIS.

FORASMUCH as here in England the differences which were before but private, concerning the points of Arminianism, have been of late so far brought upon the public stage, by occasion of the passages betwixt Mr.

[b] Mountague and his opposers, as that a dangerous schism is likely to ensue thereupon, unless by the goodness of God, and the wisdom of the Church and State, it be speedily prevented, those general directions now already laid down for the preservation of the Church's peace, will not reach home for the securing of our peace, and preventing further evils, (as the case now standeth with us,) but it is needful the Church should interpose herein, both by further explanation of her doctrine in the points questioned, and by the exercise of her discipline upon such persons as will not rest in her determinations; and this necessity will the more appear, if we consider duly upon what advantages the Arminian party hath, and yet doth gain strength to itself; namely,

1. The weakness of sundry of those exceptions, which were taken at Mr. Mountague's answer to the "Gagg[c]," by those that first openly engaged themselves in that business, which hath not only brought prejudice to their persons, but also given disadvantage to the cause, even in those exceptions which were just and material.

2. The publishing of Mr. Mountague's "Appeal[a]" with allowance, which hath both given confidence to sundry who before were but Arminians in secret, now to walk unmasked, and to profess their opinions publicly in all companies, and that with some disdain of opposition, and doth encourage also sundry others to shew an inclination to that side, which they see to be countenanced in such public sort.

3. The plausibleness of Arminianism, and the congruity it hath in sundry points with the principles of corrupt nature and of carnal reason, for it is a wonderful tickling of flesh and blood to have the powers of nature

magnified, and to hear itself flattered, as if she carried the greatest stroke in the work of salvation, especially when these soothings are conveyed under the pretence of vindicating the dispensations of God's providence from the imputation of injustice.

4. The harshness of opinion which Calvin and Beza are said to have held, and many learned men in our Church have followed concerning the decrees of reprobation and election, without respect had to Adam in the one, or to Christ in the other, whereas the inconveniences which either do ensue or seem to ensue upon that opinion, may be fairly waved another way, and yet without Arminianism.

5. The manifold cunning of the Arminians to advance their own parties. 1. In pleading for a liberty for every man to abound in his own sense in things undetermined by the Church, that so they may spread their own tenets the more freely, whereas yet it is too apparent by their writings and speeches that their intent and endeavour is to take the benefit of this liberty themselves, but not to allow it to those that dissent from them. 2. In bragging out some of their private tenets, as if they were the received established doctrines of the Church of England, by forcing the words of the Articles or Common Prayer Book to a sense which appeareth not to have been intended therein, as Mr. Mountague hath done in the point of falling from grace; whereas the contrary tenet, namely, of the final perseverance of the righteous in grace and faith, may be by as strong evidence every way, and by as natural deducement, collected out of the same books, as shall be easily proved if required. 3. In seeking to derive envy upon the opposite opinions, by de-

livering them in terms odious, and of ill and suspicious sound, as, namely, irresistibility of grace, irrespective decrees, &c. Whereas the soberer divines of the opposite party do ordinarily not use those terms, nor yet will approve of them, unless understood *cum grano salis*; but themselves rather are so exorbitant in their phrases and terms, as it were well if a good quantity of salt would so correct some of them, as to render them if not wholesome, at least savoury. 4. Which is the most unjust and uncharitable course of all the rest, and whereby yet I verily think they have prevailed more than by all the rest, in seeking to draw the persons of those that dissent from them into dislike with the state, as if they were Puritans or Disciplinarians, or at least that way affected; whereas, 1. The questions in debate no way touch upon Puritanism, either of or on. 2. Many of the Dissenters have as freely and clearly declared their judgments both by preaching and writing against all Puritanism, or Puritanical principles, both before and since they were interested in these controversies, as the stoutest Arminian in England hath done; I am not able to pronounce absolutely neither of other men, but so far as hath occurred to my observation I dare say it, I find more written against the Puritans and their opinions, and that with more real satisfaction, and upon no less solid grounds by those that have and do dissent from the Arminian tenets, than by those that have or do maintain them. Could that blessed Archbishop Whitgift, or the modest and learned Hooker, have ever thought so much as by dream, that men concurring with them in opinion should for some of these very opinions be called Puritans?

III. SERIES DECRETORUM DEI.

SINCE most of the differences now in question do arise from the different conceits which men have concerning the decrees of God about man's salvation, and the execution of those decrees, it could not but be a work of singular use, for the composing of present and the preventing of farther differences, if some learned and moderate men, all prejudice and partiality laid aside, would travail with faithfulness and sobriety in this argument, viz. so to order those decrees, consonantly to the tenure of the Scripture, and the doctrine of the ancient Church, as to avoid those inconveniences, into which the extreme opinions on both hands run: for considering often with myself, that the abettors of either extreme are confirmed in their opinions, not so much from the assurance of their own grounds, as from the inconveniences that attend the opposite extreme, I have ever thought that a middle way between both might be fairer and safer to pitch upon than either extreme. What then, after some agitation of these points, both in argument with others upon occasion, and in my private and serious thoughts, I have conceived concerning the ordering of God's decrees, desiring ever to keep myself within the bounds of Christian sobriety and modesty, I have at the request of some friends here distinctly laid down, not intending hereby to prescribe unto other men, nor yet so tying myself to my own present judgment, if I shall see cause to alter, but only to present to the abler judgments of some learned friends that way which hath hitherto given me better satisfac-

tion than any other, and which I have not yet observed to be subject to so great difficulties and inconveniences, either in the substance of the matter, or in the manner of the explication, as the ways which either the rigid Calvinists or the Arminians have taken. *Quære* then, whether or no the eternal decrees of God concerning man's salvation may not conveniently be conceived by us in this order; viz. that he decreed,

1. To make himself glorious by communicating his goodness, in producing powerfully and *ex nihilo* a world of creatures, and among the chiefest of them Man, endued with a reasonable soul and organical body, as a vessel or subject capable of grace and glory.

2. To enter into a covenant with this reasonable creature, (commonly called the first covenant, or covenant of works,) to bestow upon him life and glory, if he should continue in his obedience; but if otherwise, then not only to be deprived of that blessedness convenanted, but also and instead thereof, to be punished with actual misery and eternal death.

3. After this covenant made, to leave man *in manu consilii sui*, by the free choice of his own will, to lay hold either on life by obedience, or by transgression on death.

4. To permit man thus left to himself to fall into sin, and so to cast himself out of that covenant, into a state of misery and corruption and damnation, with a purpose in that permission to serve himself of man's fall, as a fit occasion whereby to magnify himself and his own glory yet further, in the manifestation of his infinite both justice and mercy.

5. That the whole species of so noble a creature

might not perish everlastingly, and without all remedy, to provide for mankind (*pro genere humano*) thus fallen, a most wise, convenient, and sufficient means of reparation, redemption, and salvation, by the satisfactions and meritorious death and obedience of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, God blessed for evermore.

6. In this Jesus as the Mediator to enter into a second covenant with mankind, commonly called the new covenant, or the covenant of grace, that whoever should lay hold on him by a true and stedfast faith, should obtain remission of sins and eternal life, but he that should not believe, should perish everlastingly in his sins.

7. To confer in due season upon the persons so elected all fit and effectual means, and graces needful for them unto salvation, proportionably to their personal capacities and conditions; as, viz. First, Upon infants that die before the use of reason: the Sacrament of Christian Baptism administered, and received in the name and faith of the Church with sacramental grace, to such persons as for want of the use of reason never came to be capable of the habitual or actual graces of faith, repentance, &c. we are to judge sufficient for their salvation. Secondly, Upon men that come to the use of reason sooner or later, such a measure of faith in the Son of God, and repentance from dead works, of new and holy obedience to God's commandments, (together with final perseverance of all these,) as in his excellent wisdom he seeth meet, wrought and preserved in them outwardly by the word and sacraments, and inwardly by the operation of the Holy Spirit shed in their hearts, whereby sweetly and without constraint,

but yet effectually, their understandings, wills, and affections are subdued, to the acknowledgment and obedience of the Gospel; and both these are done ordinarily, and by ordinary means. Thirdly, Into some men (it may be extraordinarily, especially in the want of ordinary means) God may infuse faith and other graces, accompanying salvation, as also, *modo nobis incognito*, make supply unto infants unbaptized some other way by the immediate work of his holy and almighty Spirit, without the use of the outward means of the word and Sacraments, of which extraordinary work we cannot pronounce too sparingly; the special use whereunto it serveth us, being the suspending of our censures, not rashly to pass the sentence of damnation upon those infants, or men, that want the ordinary outward means, since we are not able to say how God in his infinite power can, or how in his rich mercy he hath, doth, or will deal with them.

8. Thus much concerning the salvation of those, whom God hath of his free mercy elected thereunto; but with the reprobates whom he hath in his justice appointed to destruction, he dealeth in another fashion, as concerning whom he hath decreed, either

1. To afford them neither the extraordinary, nor so much as but the outward ordinary means of faith; or else,

2. In the presence of the outward means of the word and Sacraments, to withhold the inward concurrence of his enlightening and renewing Spirit, to work with these means; for the want whereof they become ineffectual to them for their good, working upon them either malignantly, so as their hearts are the more hardened thereby

in sin and unbelief; or infirmly, so as not to work in them a perfect conversion, but to produce instead of the gracious habits and sanctification, as faith, repentance, charity, and humility, &c. some weak and infirm shadows of those graces, which for their form and resemblance sake, do sometimes bear the name of those graces they resemble, but were never in the mean time the true graces themselves, and in the end are discovered to have been false for want of perseverance.

IV. UTILITAS HUJUS SERIEI.

THIS way of ordering the decrees of God, besides that it seemeth to be according to the mind of the Scripture, and to hold correspondence more than any other with the writings of the ancient Doctors of the Church, especially of St. Austin and those that followed him, as with the present doctrine contained in the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, it hath also three notable commodities.

I. Hereby are fairly avoided the most and greatest of those inconveniences into which both extremes run, or at the least, which either extreme presseth sore upon the opposite extreme, the Arminian accusing the rigid Calvinist as a betrayer of the justice of God, for placing the decree of reprobation before that of Adam's fall; and being again accused by him, as an enemy to the grace of God, for making the efficacy thereof to depend upon

man's free will; whereas both the glory of the justice of God, and the efficacy of the grace of God, are preserved entire, by following this middle way.

1. For there can be no imputation upon the justice of God, though he hath reprobated some and elected others, who were but equal in the sinful mass of corrupt nature, rather his mercy is to be magnified in that he hath not reprobated all, which if he had done his justice had yet stood clear, though examined even at the bar of human reason, forasmuch as all had deserved to be reprobates, and that most justly for their sin in Adam: they that make the decree of reprobation to precede all respect of the fall, are put to many difficulties how to express themselves so, as to avoid cavil, and much ado they have to assert the decrees of God from being howsoever unjust: being forced to succour the justice of God by flying to that absolute right and power he hath in and over the creature; whereas this way cuts off an hundred of those cavils the Arminians commonly use, and justifies the proceedings of our most righteous God in all respects so clearly, that his justice both in the decrees themselves, and in the execution thereof, is not only apparent, but illustrious and glorious.

2. No impeachment is done to grace by magnifying nature, or to the efficacy of grace by enlarging the powers of free will; for whereas in very truth the Arminians cannot with all their subtle distinctions and fine modifications escape it, but, when they have done and said what they can, they must stand guilty of symbolizing with the Pelagians both in their principles and

conclusions, in giving man's will (and not God's grace) the chiefest stroke, and the deciding and last determining and casting power in the work of conversion; by this way the will of man is so freed from all coactive necessity in the conversion of a sinner, as that yet the effect itself dependeth not upon the determination of the will as the immediate and prime cause, but upon the efficacy of grace, powerfully inclining the will thereunto.

II. Sundry passages in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Fathers, which have in them some appearance of contradiction, may by following this way be easily reconciled, and the sense of those passages, oftentimes even to the letter; which by those that take the extreme ways cannot be done so handsomely, nor without imposing upon the words a more remote and improper, if not also sometimes a strained and enforced sense; viz.

1. Those places that speak of Election, as in, and by, and through Christ, making him the foundation of that also as of every other grace, with those that speak of it as issuing from the mere free pleasure and absolute will of God.

2. Those places that extend the fruit of Christ's death and the benefit of the new covenant to the whole world of mankind, with those that restrain them to the elect only.

3. Those places that ascribe the whole course of man's salvation, from his first calling unto grace until his final consummation in glory, to the sole effectual working of the Holy Ghost, with those that attribute

something or other therein, more or less to the power and exercise of man's free will.

4. Those places that speak of the acts of justification and sanctification, or of the habits of faith and love, and other inherent graces as peculiar to the elect only, with some that speak of them as common to the elect with cast-aways.

5. Those places that speak of the said gracious acts and habits as permanent, and neither subject to a total intercision, nor possible to be finally lost, with some that speak of them as casual, and such as may be lost, either finally, or totally, or both.

6. Those places that speak of obduration, occæcation, &c. so as if the blindness that is in the minds, and the hardness that is in the hearts, of wicked men, were from God, with those that impute such blindness and hardness in men, unto the wilfulness of their own corrupt heart.

III. Hence may be received good light for the cutting off of some, the moderating of other some, and the resolving the rest of those questions, which are now most in agitation, not only in the Church of England, but in many foreign churches also, popish and reformed, as, namely, among others,

1. Whether Christ was ordained a mediator in the intention of God for mankind indefinitely, or universally for all mankind, or only for the elect?

2. Whether all mankind have title to the second covenant, and to the promises and conditions therein proposed, or the elect only?

3. Whether the wicked who are both disobedient and unbelievers come under the sentence of condemn-

ation formally, for their disobedience unto God in the breach of the first covenant, or for their unbelief in not resting upon Christ and the promises of the new covenant?

4. In what comprehension man is to be considered as the object of predestination?

5. Whether or no God did elect men unto salvation in a certain and determinate number?

6. Whether or no in electing men unto salvation, God had respect to Christ?

7. Whether in electing some and rejecting others, God was moved to decree as he did, from the faith or infidelity of the persons, or for any other thing whatsoever foreseen in them?

8. Whether the decrees of election and reprobation be absolute and peremptory and unalterable, by God's determination of them to a certain effect, or so conditional and indeterminate, as that the performance or not-performance of something required on our part, may either establish or annul them; *quod est quærere*, whether an elect person by disobedience and unbelief can so cut himself off from the covenant of grace, as to be damned; or a reprobate by faith and repentance so lay hold on the covenant, as to be saved?

9. Whether a man by the power of his free will can lay hold on Christ by faith, and convert himself from sin by repentance and new obedience, without that grace of special illumination from the Holy Spirit of God?

10. Whether the right use of naturals be any cause to induce God to confer upon any man sufficient grace for his conversion?

11. Whether the same grace of spiritual illumination which is sufficient and effectual for the converting one man, can in the same measure be ineffectual to another for his conversion?

12. Whether the efficacy of the grace of conversion depend upon the determination of man's free will, so as by resisting it to make it ineffectual?

13. Whether justification and sanctification be proper to the elect only?

14. What measure of assurance we have concerning the justification of such infants born of Christian parents, and rightly baptized before they come to the use of reason, to commit actual sin?

15. What measure of assurance we have concerning the salvation of such infants so baptized, if they die before they come to the use of reason?

16. Whether a person truly justified by his own actual faith, and sanctified with the spirit of holiness, can fall wholly from the state of grace into the state of sin, in a total loss of faith and other habitual graces?

17. Whether a person so justified and sanctified can at the last fall away finally, and be damned?

Concerning all which and sundry other questions of like nature and use, albeit it would require a large treatise to give them but a right stating, much more a just discussion, yet the due consideration of the eight points premised in the former section concerning the order of God's decrees, may give us some light into them all, if not so far, especially in some of them, as to settle our judgments in a certain and infallible resolution, yet so far at least as to keep our understandings within some competent bounds of sobriety and truth, that we neither lose ourselves in

curious enquiries to little purpose, nor suffer our judgments to be envenomed with the poison either of rank Pelagian heresy, or semi-Pelagian popery, or quarter-Pelagian and Arminian novelty.

NOTES.

[a] P. 328. For the origin of these names, given respectively to the patrons of Arminius and Calvin, whose controversies began to embroil the Netherlandish Churches in 1609, and afterwards gave occasion to the Synod at Dort, and for an account of the proceedings of this assembly and of the Arminian Tenets, see, amongst others, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, in his chapter on the Arminian Church. See also Collier's Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, relative to the four deputies sent out by King James to be present at the meeting, as well as Bishop Hall's Account of his own Life.

[b] P. 322. Richard Montague or Montagu, Bishop of Norwich in 1638. He was distinguished as a warm controversialist on most points then debated amongst the Papists, Calvinists, and Arminians, and was the cause of much dissension in the English Church by his assertion of positions which were thought nearly allied to those maintained by the Remonstrants in Belgium. Bishop Hall endeavoured in vain by many conciliatory treatises to soften the differences between him and his opponents. See Collier's Ecclesiastical History, and Bayle's Dictionary and Continuation.

[c] Ibid. Amongst Mr. Montague's Tracts, was one published in 1624, and written in reply to a Pamphlet sent him by some Roman Catholic Priests and Jesuits, called *A New Gagg for the Old Gospel*, which pretended to confute the reformed out of their own Bibles. The Title of his Answer was the following: *A Gagg for the New Gospel? No: A New Gagg for an Old Goose.* It highly offended the Calvinistic party.

[d] Ibid. This was the famous book entitled *Appello Cæsarem*, written in defence of his former Tract, under the protection of King James, but which in the next year brought on the Author the displeasure of the first Parliament of King Charles for disturbing the peace of the Church; and subjected him to an impeachment, which however does not seem to have been carried through. See Collier's Ecclesiastical History, Bayle's Dictionary, Rushworth, and others.

THE END.

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